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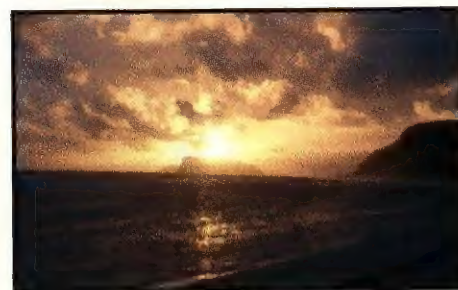
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# international tattoo art

may 2002



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editorial

"There were no goddamn tattoos."

## friday the 13th

fell on a Sunday in January.

As it happened, it was a summery 80-degree Sunday in LA, which is where I was. I had risen in the predawn hours, as they say in police reports, eaten a sausage and egg breakfast, and hit the slab to Pasadena.

Destination: the famous Rose Bowl swap meet. It's a big sale, and draws maybe 4,000 buyers. The Rose Bowl is officially billed as "Where the Stars Shop," and I did, on a previous visit, see Meg Ryan out there trying to hide her cute mug under a baseball cap.

But if you're looking for stars, there are more reliable venues, and I don't really give a damn about that anyway. I'm just a flea market addict, looking to make a score.

By noon it had hit that 80-degree mark, a perfect east coast June day on the west coast in January. Folk were running around in shorts and tank tops. Being a resident of the land of the ice and snow, where the midnight sun and the hot springs flow, I had no such garments with me. But it was about noon, amid all that LA skin, when I realized what was missing.

Tattoos.

There were no goddamn tattoos.

Well, not none. Between buyers and dealers I saw five tattooed people, not counting myself. Two Japanese rockabilly cats, two fellas with matching armbands who appeared to be more than just raquetball partners, and one big sleeved biker.

# a great



By Chris Pfouts

# void

Out of 4,000 people—any kind of people—this isn't a very good percentage. Any bingo game or farm tractor auction in the midwest—events that would be very lucky to draw even 400 people—will have more than five tattooed people. There were almost as many Von Dutch shirts in the Rose Bowl crowd as there were inked people, and no armwork on the neo-Dutch fans. The crowd also included body-beautiful types airing their tans and midribs, a strong surfer contingent, 50s decor gals in birth-control eyeglasses, skatepunks, punk punks, a few porn-star types, chicanos, plus all the general swap meet humanity, period. It was just a pathetic showing, tattoo-wise. Statistically, I'd have said it was almost impossible. If it was Boston you could think maybe the tattoos were hidden under clothing, but an 80-degree LA Sunday, unless they all went in for intimate-type work, I'm not buying it.

Just heaping smartass-ness onto this subject was the syndicated comic strip "Non Sequitur" on January 17. Here, a subteen brat proclaims to her father, "In keeping with my lifelong pursuit of rebelling against mainstream society, I've decided not to get any tattoos."

Tattooing is a gift. If people want to ignore that gift, all the more for me. Ambrose Bierce was a writer who fought in the Civil War with men he considered brave and gallant, and against men he considered equally brave and gallant. About the bloody victory at Shiloh, Bierce wrote, "Lead had scored its old-time victory over steel; the heroic had broken its great heart against the commonplace."

There at the Rose Bowl, commonplace skin was winning. ♠

Chris Pfouts  
Editor

great void...a great void a great void



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# letters

to the editor

INTERNATIONAL TATTOO ART welcomes letters.

All letters submitted will be considered for publication. We reserve the right to edit and/or excerpt letters as space dictates, while retaining the original intent. Send your thoughts, positive or negative, on any aspect of tattooing to:

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achieve my goal, which is to work in a tattoo shop. Being a tattoo artist, I notice there is a lot of arrogance in this industry. I believe that more artists should be like Rich. I could never describe in words how much he has changed my life for the better. He has given me drive to be the best I can be. So I hope you print this letter so I can share with the world what an amazing artist we have here in Colorado, and I appreciate his help.

Ken Garza  
West Colfax Tattoo

\*\*\*\*\*

## WE WERE BORN HEAVY

I would like to praise you and not just because I love tattoos. I praise you completely because you let us learn from the masters. I'm not so sure if all people who are getting tattoos want to know what a real tattoo is — it's all this stuff about how to look good on a beach and not about self-expression. Sure I wanna look good, but the opportunity to get tattoos means much more than that. And I know I'll always look good with good tattoos.

Your magazine and a couple of other influences have made me a tattooist. Thanks, because here in middle Europe, in the middle of nowhere, it's pretty hard to do. Guys doing tattoos are really fine here but not such good designers. Always they're just workers and copyists of tribal and flash motifs. So the way to learn this art is by doing it myself. Looking for it and searching. I was really happy when my man and some of his friends gave me a few magazines and books. I could

see real skin art. It awoke my skills, which I had learned in graphic schools. Now I'm doing big stuff, and I feel great. It's a passion, not like in school. I'm going to open my own tattooery in the U.S. I would love to see more girls and young persons (and older also) in this art. So this is my reason to thank you, thank my man and my friends too. Stay heavy!

Angelina  
Kickass Tattooery  
Czechoslovakia

## THE WAY IT OUGHT TO BE

Hello. I would like first to express my appreciation of the excellent job your staff does. I look forward to reading your magazine and looking at the awesome pictures of the amazing work. I would also like to thank you for the coverage you have done on the work of Rich Aries (Sept. 2001 issue), who works out of Steel City. Rich is a very amazing artist and nice person, who has given me very important advice and has been inspiration in helping me

## WHAT NEXT?

After reading your January 2001 issue, I'm totally disgusted by your magazine. What's with all this crap on "mehndi" tattooing? Also all the write-ups on Polynesia and other foreign crap? I felt like I was reading a National Geographic magazine. With all the mayhem in this country today, you would think you guys would get back to the good ole' USA. Showing articles on some 15-year-old getting her hands painted with some yuppie fashion crap that smells like fermented dogshit is not about tattooing at all. Putting stars over tattoos was bad enough, but this now? Get back to the real McCoy and do more articles on OUR roots to tattooing: Cap Coleman, Paul Rogers, Huck Spaulding, etc. Please don't tell me that face-painted natives slapping themselves with sticks and crushed leaves is where it all began. We all know Jonathan Shaw started that. What next, "Tattooing in Afghanistan" or "Taliban Tattoos?" C'mon guys. Get back to tattooing.

Doug H.  
Krazy Kat Tattoo  
Clayton, NC



Actually, I'd like to see a Taliban tattoo—a hundred and fifty meters would be close enough, I could centerpunch it at that distance using my scope. And yeah, point taken, and that mendhi thing was the last you'll ever see of that in these pages—and my word counts. But dude, Shaw's been gone for like nine years—and our name is INTERNATIONAL TATTOO ART, the international part being stuff from around the world. And a lot of it kicks ass. Like the Polynesian stuff in this issue. In years past we've brought out as much as we could find about all the old-timers — but we're still looking, and more stuff comes to light all the time.

—Chris Pfouts

#### IT NEVER STOPS

I am writing in support of the views of Wil Lefever in the September, 2001 issue of ITA. It is hypocritical and two-faced to censor tattoo art while allowing the printing of the word "fuck" in your own editorial. You are even inconsistent in your censorship. On page 80 of the same issue, there are two naked female demons on the guy's back clearly displaying prominent nipples. I guess that's ok because they're not attractive females, but nipples are nipples, guy!

Mike Wimbury  
Tiverton, Devon  
England

fuck, fuck, fuck, fuck. Shit, too. We missed a couple. Here's how it is, goddamnit. Rather than just dump good photos of great tattooing because it had some non-family content, we decided to run it with the nipples starred out. We felt the rest of the tattooing warranted it, and we also figure you now what a nipple looks like. They're real cute, most

people think. The situation that led up to that has been hashed over here too many times to bring it up again. And we don't see how it's hypocritical or two-faced to be able to say what we want in writing.

#### IN THE WRONG BOX

Thank you for the constant inspiration. Through the years I have used your magazine for anything between kitty litter and as a source of general jealousy. From the constant improvement of the presentation and expectation you strive to deliver, I can only imagine the overflowing mail room of responses. I have been plundering through a steady course of art studies, and I feel your magazine represents the highest degree of tattoo accomplishment.

Sincerely,  
Xenia S'kaya

You used us for kitty litter? That's kinda harsh. But it brings up a funny story. Years ago, when videotape was still done reel-to-reel, there were only a couple people who saw it as a possible art tool. One was Nam June Paik, and among the things he did was to make a chair with a television set as the seat. He went on the old Dick Cavett talk show to discuss his stuff, and while he was talking he ran a picture of Cavett's face on the seat screen. During the program he sat on the image of Cavett's face, which got Cavett about as pissed off as a TV show host could get on-screen in the 60s.

We feel the same way about being used for kitty litter. If you're going to do it, do it in private and don't tell us.

#### TIME AND MORE TIME

I'm aware that it takes a long time for something to show up on the stands, but can you give me an idea how backed up you are with photos? Could it be months or could it take over a year?

Nathan Parrish  
Tears and Laughter Tattooing  
Madison, WI

It can take over a year—and at the very least a few months. We're currently working four to five months in advance of the cover date — but it's not like we have stuff figured out that far in advance. It's sort of like a slow-moving cattle stampede around here — we're all going in the same direction, at more or less the same pace, and we'll all arrive at the same destination. It's the way we've always handled things.

#### MOTOWN STYLE

It was great to see the article on Bob Tyrrell. He's one of Detroit's best natural resources — especially that portrait of Angelina Jolie kicks ass. Me and my friends had heard about Kid Rock's back and wondered who did the work. You hear all kinds of crap on the street. Good to finally know.

Steve Campos  
St. Clair Shores, MI

#### WE GOOFED!

On the cover of the November, 2001 issue we mistakenly credited the tattoo work. Jennifer Byrd's sleeve was in fact done by Novi of Babylon Tattoo at 831 B N. Federal Highway, Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, 33304, phone (954) 524-5101. Novi's a hell of a nice guy, and we apologize.



By David Krysz

# MITCH

From the city that brought you both Al Capone and Al Bundy ...

# O'CONNELL



Forty-year-old Mitch O'Connell has been cranking out his own special style of pop culture-soaked art for about 22 years. Recently, his art has hit a tattoo-inspired curve.

The change has Mitch turning out flash sets and other art that is clean and direct and—if not in classic style—does at least spring from old-school inspiration.

Old school tattoos, O'Connell said, "have a certain timeless quality about them, and a history that comes from perfecting a craft."

Mitch keeps his bread buttered by doing freelance illustrations for the corporate world of advertising, and his work has appeared in top-shelf magazines like *Playboy*, *Newsweek* and *Juxtapoz* (and now *ITA*). His foray into the world of tattoo began when he started to hear from fans that were inked with his images. "To see my work tattooed is the highest form of flattery," he said. Consider that the majority of his freelance work is created for publications that are transient by nature. "A newspaper lasts a day," he said. "A magazine lasts a month, and a gallery show, a few weeks." The tattoo is a lifetime commitment.

Which is why O'Connell entered the inky waters of the skin trade very gingerly, one toe at a time. When he began to create his first flash sheets, O'Connell was careful to keep things in perspective.

"I have been trying to improve upon my technique—asking advice of tattooer and tattooee alike,"

he said. "I want my flash designs to be workable and wearable, not just to hang on the shop wall." Sizewise, he focuses on smaller to mid-size pieces. O'Connell cites Sailor Jerry, Chicago's Tats Thomas, Owen Jensen and Dainty Dotty as a few of his tattoo influences. More recent





influences include Daniel Higgs, Marcus Kuhn, Seth Ciferri and Eric Maaske.

"The heaviness and strength of the tattoo is what impresses me most," O'Connell said. "The art of the tattoo reflects a sense of business and skilled craft that was learned over time. It feels very solid, very American."

And O'Connell is genuinely fascinated by American art. His paintings and illustrations are rife with all manner of American pop iconography and imagery, including beatnik bulldogs, fez-wearing wolves, big eyed children, business suited aliens and hot, half-nekkid women. Each of his works is like a trip back in time. Imagine taking the last 50 years worth of consumer culture TV and advertising, combine it with anything that was ever considered cute, throw in a few fads and some retro stylings, and spread it across a

canvas. You pretty much have the makings of a classic O'Connell work.

Like most true artists, Mitch has been creating since he could hold a crayon. Whatever materials were given him, Mitch dove in with abandon. Stacks of paper, pens, pencils and a variety of after-school art activities laid the groundwork for his path as a working artist. As the years went by, he honed his skills, reaching the point of graphic intensity and detail that has made his work popular around the world. To see his color paintings up close is to be truly amazed at what can be accomplished with a little pen and watercolor paint.

O'Connell lives with his wife and two children in a quiet northwest Chicago neighborhood. Entering the O'Connell residence is like stepping into one of his paintings--a strange and wonderful Noah's Ark of all that is weird and cool about Americana, rescued from the never-ending flood of change and "progress." Velvet paintings, pulp novels, sideshow banners, Shriner ephemera and tacky airport novelties abound. O'Connell is especially proud of his killer collection of religious statues.


This may explain why the personal works that he does tend to resemble the morning after, when you're trying to recall what happened the night before, but it's all coming back in scary little pieces.

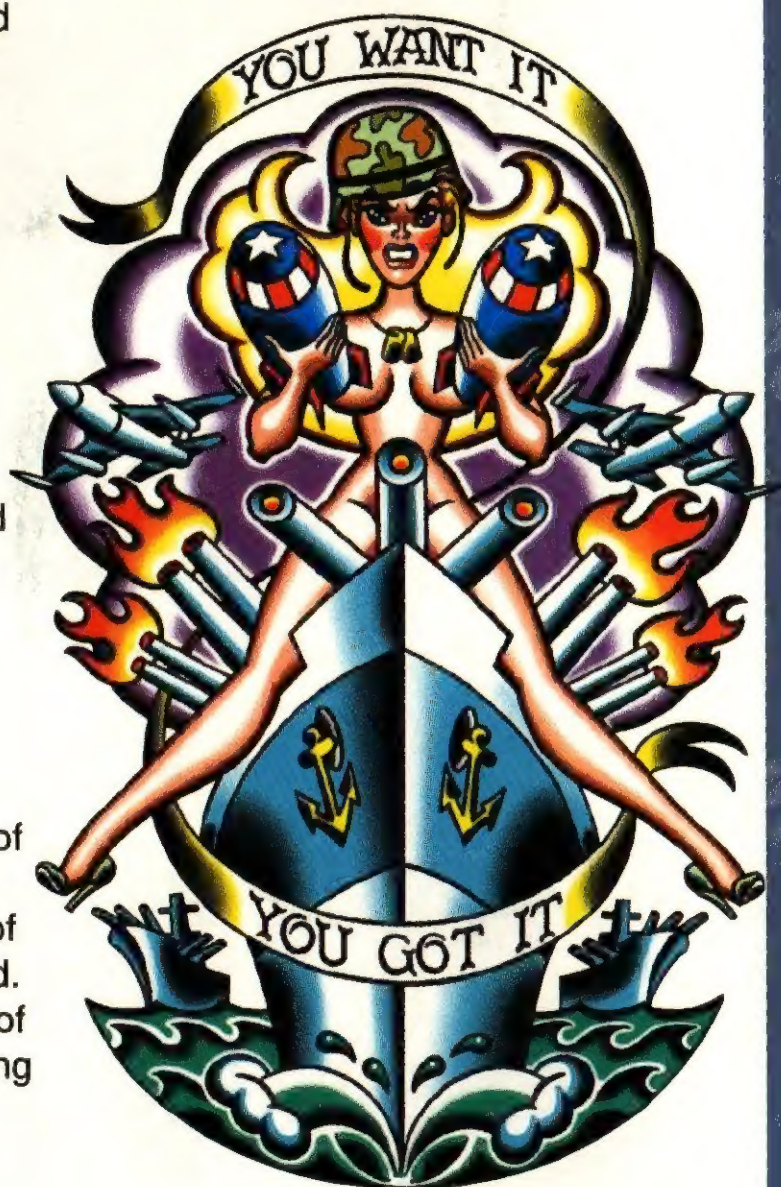
O'Connell has steadily built a fan base for his stylized mixture of decadence and kitsch, and he plans to keep pumping out sets of his unique flash. "Ideally," he said. "I would like to create a new set of 11 sheets each year, but I'm taking it one step at a time."

O'Connell has also begun to see a difference in his painting technique as a result of his flash art experience. "I find the way I ink the lines of my paintings and illustrations changing as a response to the simpler tattoo designs," he said. "Even my approach to color has started to

evolve from my earlier work."

To further explore or buy Mitch O'Connell's art, visit his website at [www.mitchoconnell.com](http://www.mitchoconnell.com).

The site includes a virtual tour of his house and a link to Hellbomb, who are producing a line of shirts featuring his designs. 



*M.O.C.*

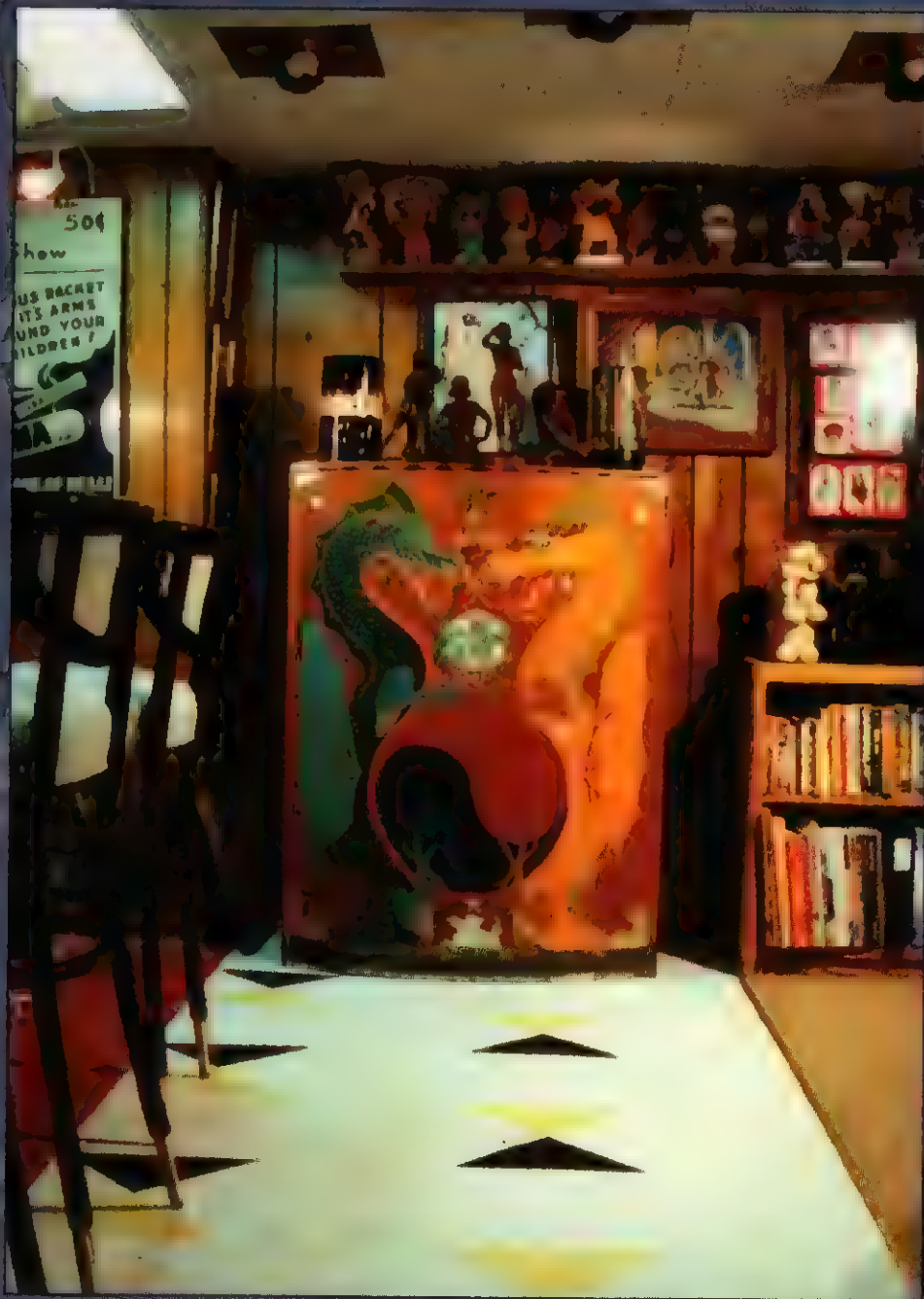


















# the Highest H O B O

Over the last hundred years or so there have been a lot of knights of the road who lusted after the title of "King of the Hobos." At one time there were actual conventions and elections, and maybe there still are. A few years ago Dr. Ducky Doolittle gave us a paper cafe napkin rubber-stamped with a message to vote for Blackie as King of the Hobos. Evidently Blackie, in his travels, opened up napkin dispensers and rubber stamped his campaign message on the contents before refilling the holders. Evidently Ducky stopped for a weiner after Blackie had fled the scene.

Anyway, this mid-1950s photo is of a fella named Jeff Davis, a pretender to the hobo throne. Davis was photographed while stopping in Indianapolis on his way West, during his 10th trip around the world. The star tattooed on his forehead perhaps denotes him as a chosen one. Maybe the King.



## TRAVELS WITH CHARLIE



This is a famous photo of pioneering Bowery tattooer Charlie Wagner and friends. It was probably taken in the 1920s, judging from the flapper clothing on his companions. Charlie himself appears to be wearing nothing.

The gal seated on his lap is also well known in tattoo circles – she's Millie Hull, and she was also a Bowery tattooer. It's the identity of the woman seated above Charlie's shoulder that seems to draw blanks.

We were fortunate in finding this particular copy of the photo, because somebody was smart enough to have pencilled everyone's name on the back—and they did it with the easy familiarity of someone who knew the players.

To clear up the mystery about the other woman's identity once and for all, her name was Jean Carson. Charlie Wagner, Millie Hull, and Jean Carson. You can put a name to all of them now.

It's not like finding out where Jimmy Hoffa's buried, but it's another small piece of the tattoo history puzzle. Consider it a public service from *International Tattoo Art*.





# CALENDAR OF EVENTS

## on the English convention calendar

Mantra Tattooing in Cheltenham is putting together the Mantra 2002 Tattooing and Body Decoration Exhibition at the Cheltenham Racecourse August 3rd & 4th. For information, dial England however you do from where you are, and contact Paul or Mark at 01242 690001, by fax at 01242 700067, or email [information@mantratattooing.com](mailto:information@mantratattooing.com). The Mantra studio is at 1 St. Georges St., Cheltenham, Gloucs, England GL50 4NU

## man's ruin

MAN'S RUIN The Second Annual Man's Ruin Tattoo Arts Expo will be held at the Holiday Inn Select Conference Hotel in Decatur, IL, June 7-9. Toll free information is at (866) 4TATTOO, or direct at (412) 531-5319. The show features Lyle Tuttle's machine seminars and history slide show. On the Web: <http://tattoopgh.com>.

## shake a tail feather

The Second Annual International Canary Tattoo Convention will be held May 3, 4 and 5, in Las Palmas, the capital city of the Canary Islands, on Gran Canaria. Organized by Canary Tattoo, Hans and Ingrid van de Bor, Michel Gonzalez, and Radio Las Palmas, the venue will once again be in edificio Miller, on Santa Catalina Park in central Las Palmas. For information contact [canarytattoo@hotmail.com](mailto:canarytattoo@hotmail.com), or telephone 00/34.639.73.86.92, or fax 00/34.928.77.32.94. And tell them ITA sent you.

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### Second Annual Biggest Tattoo Show

- Oct. 4th-Oct. 6th, 2002
- Meadowlands Convention Center
- Convention Information (973) 751-8511 or (804) 440-4255



### Tenth Annual Richmond Tattoo Arts Festival

- Nov. 22nd-Nov. 24th
- Holiday Inn Select Koger Center
- Hotel Info (800) 465-4329
- Convention Information (404) 222-8385 or (804) 440-4255



## GETTIN' FAMOUS AT 36 FRAMES PER SECOND

Our old friend, the original Tennessee Dave (Chris Pfouts is still carrying a tattoo he did in 1971), runs West Coast Tattoo Studio at 5th and Main in downtown Los Angeles. If you drive into 5th Street from the Los Angeles Street, a big sign informs you that you're entering the Fashion District.

If nothing else, the block is super fashionable with film crews. On a recent visit to the City of Angels,

we showed up a few hours after *NYPD Blue* had filmed a scene inside West Coast – a couple of the young female dicks had asked a tattooed actor about a hand piercing. Don't know why they couldn't have used Dave or Big John as actors, nobody looks more like lifetime tattooers than those guys. Anyway, West Coast Tattoo has been in the 5th and Main area for around 40 years, maybe more, and in that time the shop (at least the front) has appeared in a couple editions of *Dragnet*, as well as episodes of *Kojak*, *Baretta*, *Hill Street Blues*, *Joe Forrester*, the movie *The New Centurions*, *The Blue Knight*, (both the film and the TV show), as well as a ton of commercials, the most recent being a Japanese Pepsi commercial.



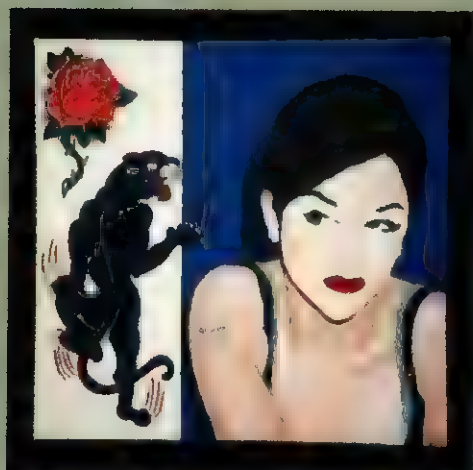




# tattos getcha



# SEX



Recently the lease went up in smoke for Vancouver, Canada's Tart Gallery. The owners, Nicole Steen and Vicki M. – who call themselves the Poptarts – have officially moved the gallery out of its longtime digs in the back of Zulu Records. They didn't go quietly. Their final exhibition at the old venue was a sizzlin' lowbrow show called "Tatts Getcha Sex."

The show was dedicated to tattooed men and women of yesteryear, honoring the sailors, bikers, hustlers, convicts and sundry other sleeparound art lovers who kept tattooing alive during its lean skid row years.

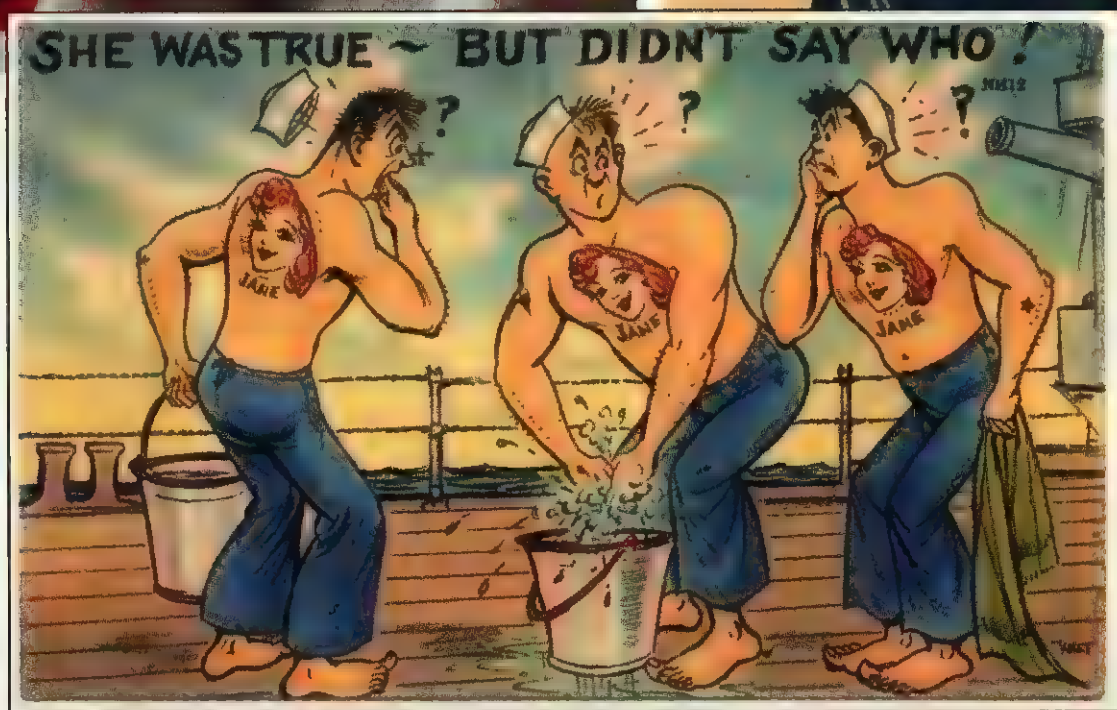
The show brought together local Canadian talents like 12 Midnite; I, Braineater; and the Poptarts themselves, with contributions from American artists like Kirsten Easthope; Sunny Buick; and Kalynn Campbell. A host of creative mediums were presented including photography, paintings, digital art, assemblage, neon, illustration, collage and sculpture. The show was a huge success, Steen said, due to both the high quality of work and the public's warm reception of the subject matter.

If you're wondering where the gals will unpack their gallery bags in the future, check out [www.thetartgallery.com](http://www.thetartgallery.com). They're always up to something slinky and sinful, and the web site will let you know when they've found a new home.



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## SPACE COWBOYS

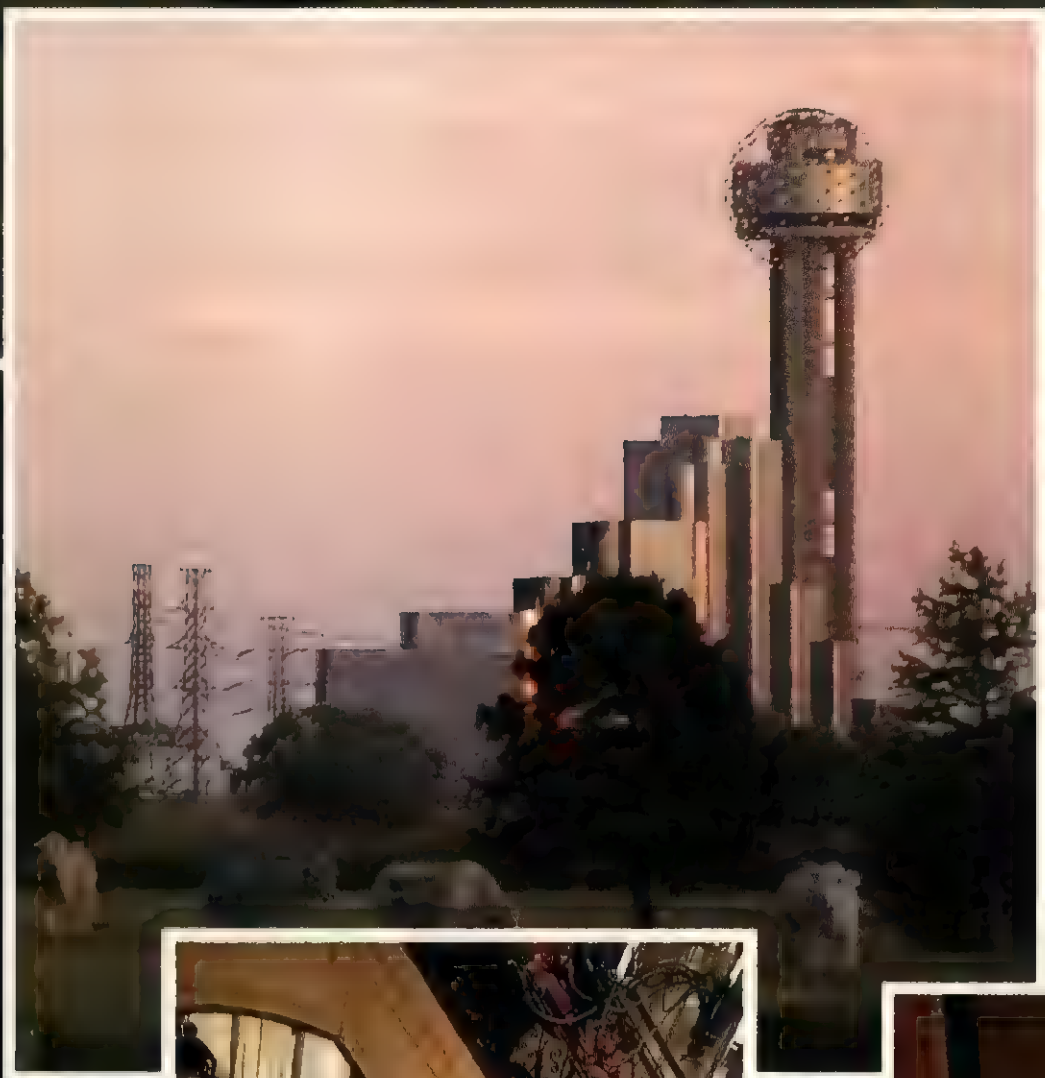
In January of 2003 (we don't have an exact date yet), tattooer Sunny Buick, of San Francisco's famous Goldfield's, will be curating an all-medium themed show at the 111 Minna Gallery in SF. The theme: Sci-Fi Western. This should be a killer show, and a catalog of the art will be published. We'll let you know further details as they surface.

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**Story By Frankie McCann  
& Photos by Richard Todd**





# Third TIME'S the CHARM

Texans are big tattoo consumers—they go for their ink in a nonstop way. And Dallas is a natural location for a convention. It's a big city, but not gigantic, and on a studio-per-capita basis, as Brian Everett said, "There are more shops around Dallas-Fort Worth than in most places. There are probably 60 or 70 shops in the area."

For the last three years, Brian Everett of Route 66 and Tramp of Eternal Tattoos have put out a huge effort to bring a quality convention into the DFW area. The first time didn't really click. It happens sometimes with first conventons. The second shot was hampered by monsoon weather. And in Texas, man, when they get bad weather there are no maybes about it—it's really bad weather. Under those conditions, no matter how cool an event is, people stay home.

But perseverance pays off. This time, with a few adjustments and a new venue, the Texas Tattoo Roundup came off the blocks number one with a bullet.

"We were worried," Tramp said, "because it was only three weeks after the World Trade Center bombing." Never let it be said that a bunch of geeky sheiks stood in the way of American tattooing—especially not in Texas. Because of 9-11 or in spite of it is impossible to know, but Dallas showed up for this convention big time. "We tripled our turnout," Tramp said.

"It was a much, much better show," Everett said. "We did some groundwork we hadn't done in the past. I came to the conclusion that what we needed was more local participation, so I went around and met a lot of the people at the shops and told them we needed their support."

"When you're doing an international show," he said, "you're trying to get as many of the brand names and as many artists from other countries as possible. That becomes your priority, and local artists kind of feel like they've been left out. To alleviate that we tried to make them feel part of it. We issued complimentary passes to all their artists, in return they passed out our flyers. It seemed to pay off."

Add to that the splendid location—and staff participation—of the Crowne Plaza Market Center Hotel. "We got closer to the Deep Elem area," Everett said, "and we were right off 35E, which is a much more popular road. Strategically it was a much better location."

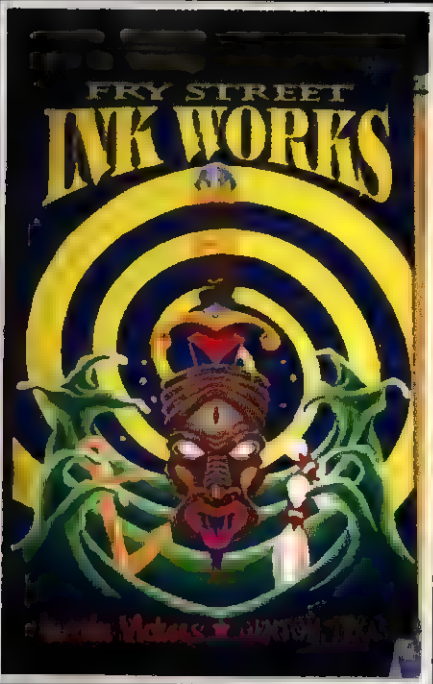
"Finding the right location really made it click," Tramp said.

Veteran conventioners know that a helpful, flexible hotel staff can help make a show a real pleasure. A staff with a stick up its collective ass, while it can't totally break a show, can at least dent the experience badly. And a surly hotel staff reflects badly on the promoters, even though it's not their fault.

Tattoo expos are different than the kinds of conventions hotels are accustomed to, and not every hotel can make the necessary adjustments. With veteran promoters like Tramp and Everett at the helm, all the hotel management has to do was follow suggestions and, like the old song says, "oh how the money rolls in." Mainly food and drink money. Basically, the staff had to set their clock back about four hours, which meant keeping the restaurants standing by to serve a packed and hungry house in the midnight hour, and making sure the overflowing bars stayed open until legal closing. "The people in the restaurant liked the crowd," Everett said, "and the crowd liked them. They were tipping well. Same with the bars. It had good vibes







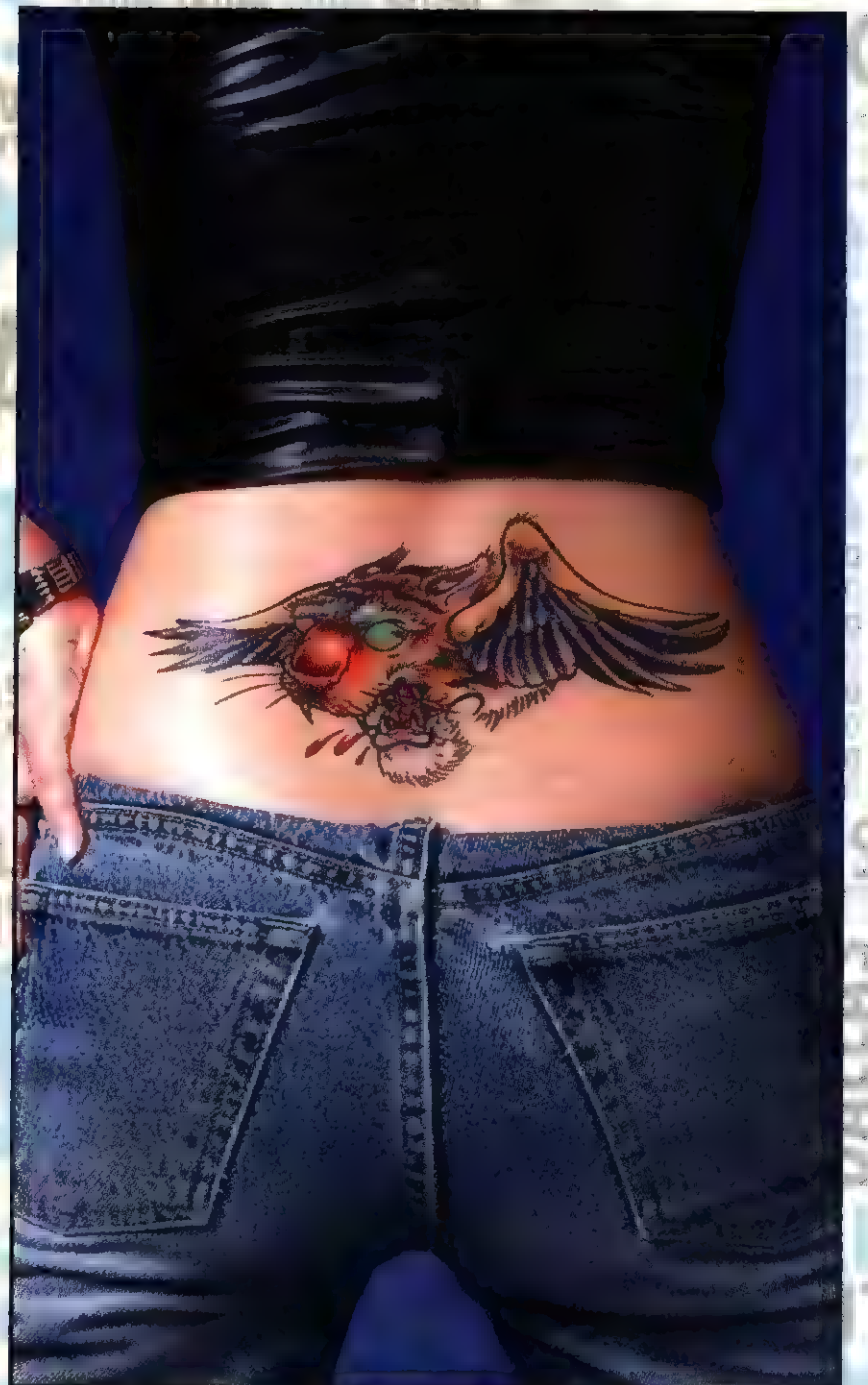
from the get-go."

Beyond that, if management can prevent housekeeping from knocking on doors at 8 a.m., you're in tall cotton. Both Tramp and Everett really applaud the cooperation they got from the folks at the Crowne Plaza Market Center. "They were just a pleasure to work with," Everett said. "They were very professional, very accomodating to the crowd. They went with the flow and made the whole thing work well."

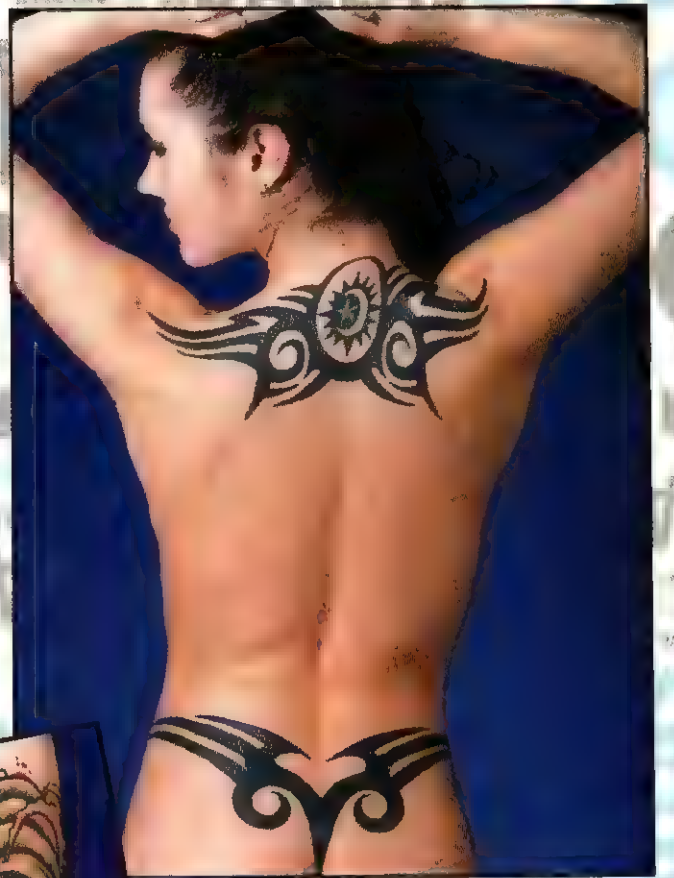
And, as the Crowne Plaza folks found out, tattoo conventioners are vastly more entertaining than a national meeting of drunken vacuum cleaner salespeople or an annual statewide coven of high-school principals. A lobby full of half-naked, brightly inked and heavily pierced individuals is a lot easier on the eyes than an acre of suits and power ties jabbing at their Palm Pilots.

Among the talents on hand for the third Tattoo Roundup: Joe Capobianco, Harry and Andi Root, James and Tim Kern from No Hope No Fear, Trilogy Tattoo, Skinsations Tattoo, Capital Tattoo, Six Feet Under Tattoo, Bodyworks Tattoo Studio, Sacred Heart Tattoo, Avalon Tattoo, Everlasting, Electric Superstition, Fry Street Inkworks, Tabu Tattoo, Cap Szumski, Artist-At-Large and Beatnik Dennis McPhail, Eternal Tattoos, Detroit's Bob Tyrrell, 3rd Eye Tattoo Co., Michele Wortman, Joe Johns, Ben Wahhh, Judy Parker, Topnotch Tattoos, Dragon Moon Tattoo Studio, Obie Hughes, Matt Shamah, Sean "Ozz" Oliver, Atlas, Mike Parsons of Psycho Tattoo, Dan Gilsdorf, Seth Ciferri, Tom Renshaw, Deborah Brody from Pair O, Dice in Dallas, Oliver "Ducky" Peck, 360 Blues Tattoos, Dave Fox from Olde City, Shane O'Neill of Studio One, Shaper's Quest, Wes Diffie, Jennifer Billig, and Inkmaster from Pescara, Italy.

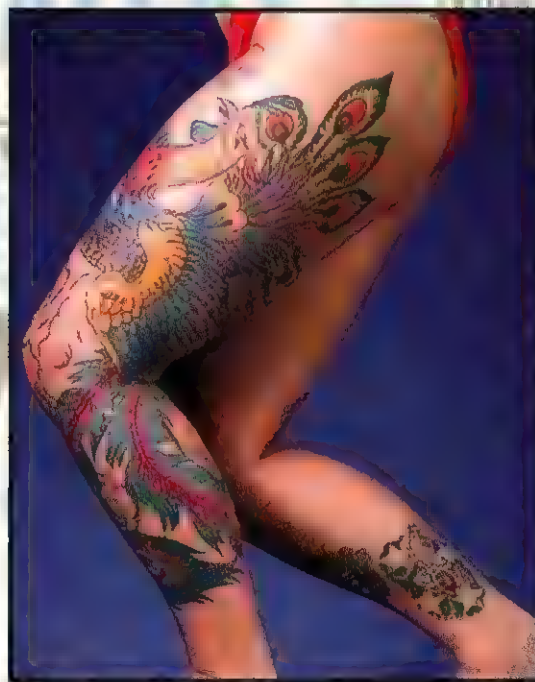
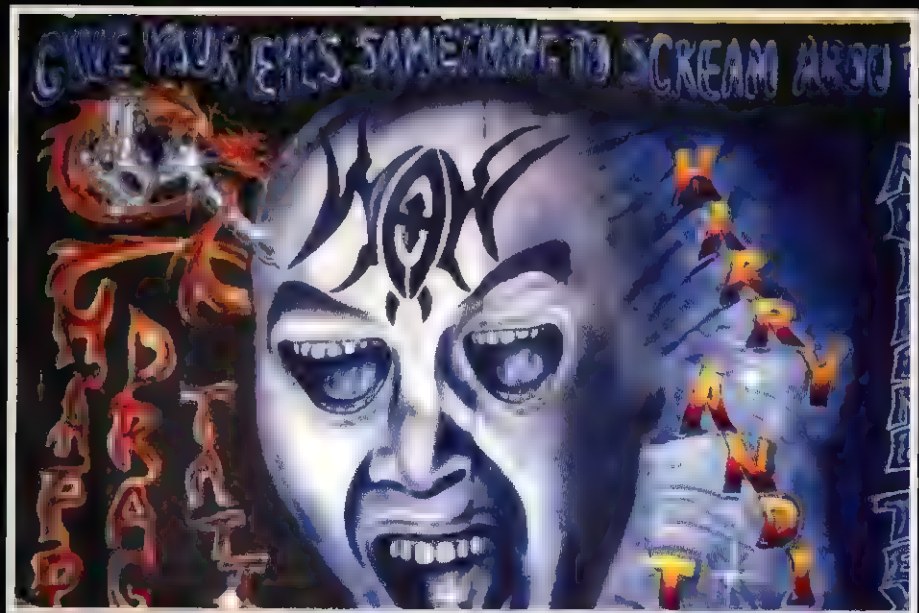
The dates are already set for the 2002 Roundup: November 8, 9 and 10 in the same Place, Crowne Plaza Market Center. Be there—we will.



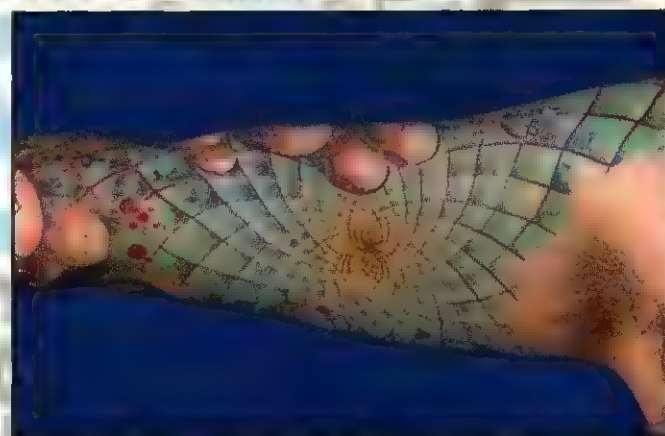
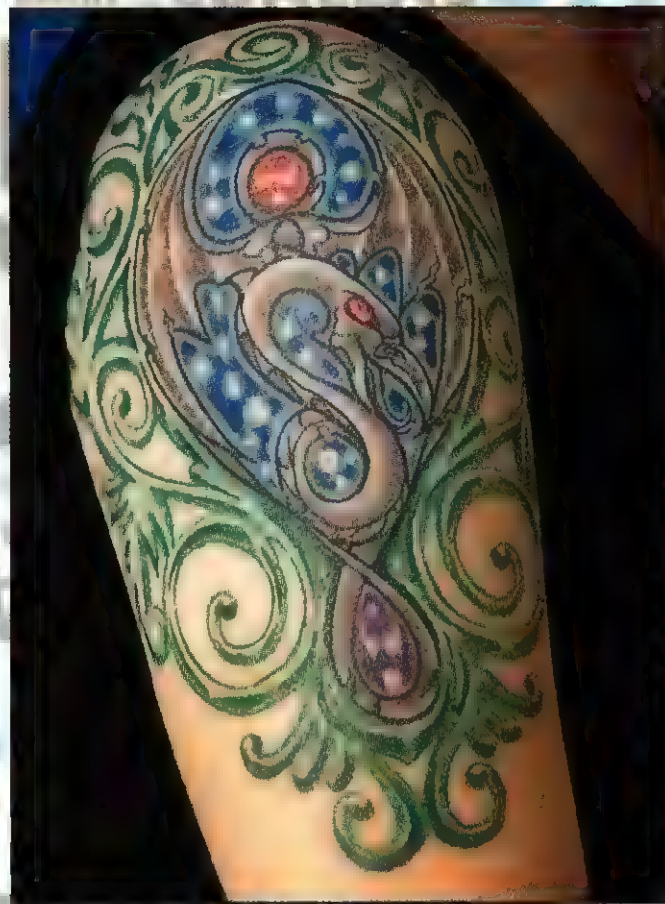




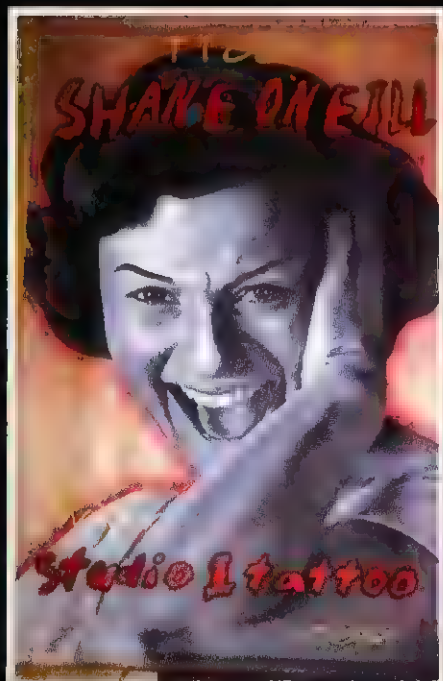








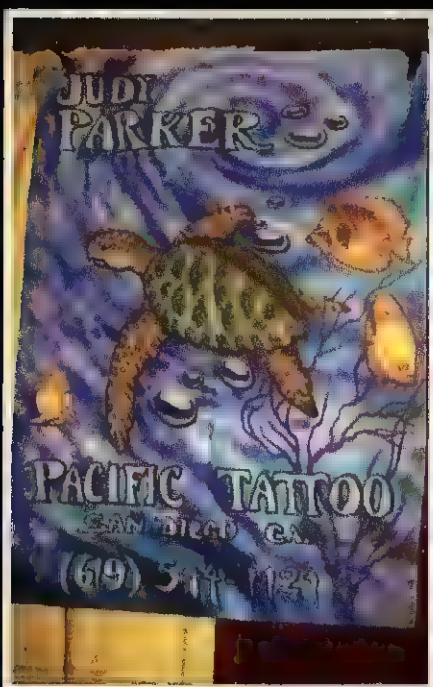








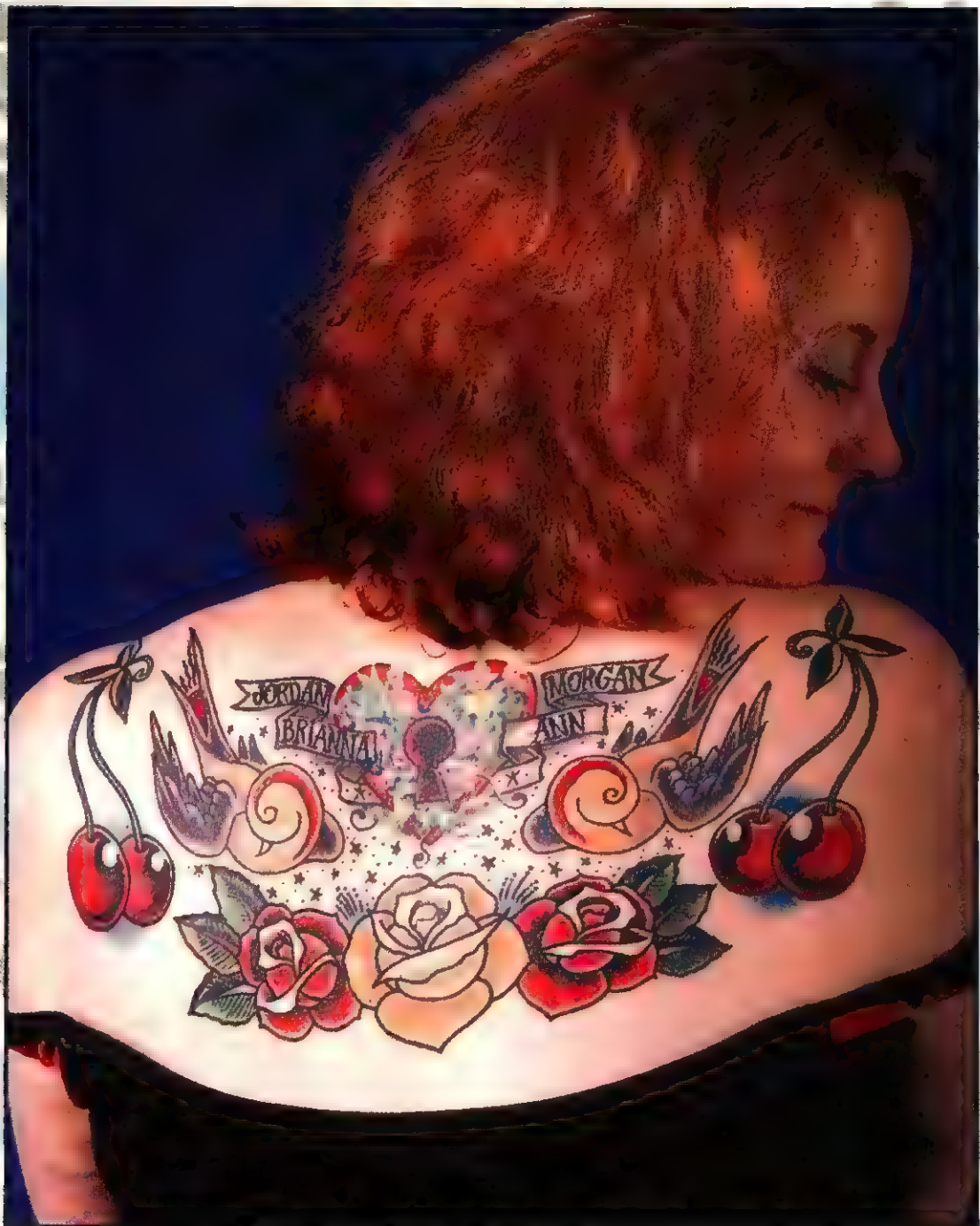
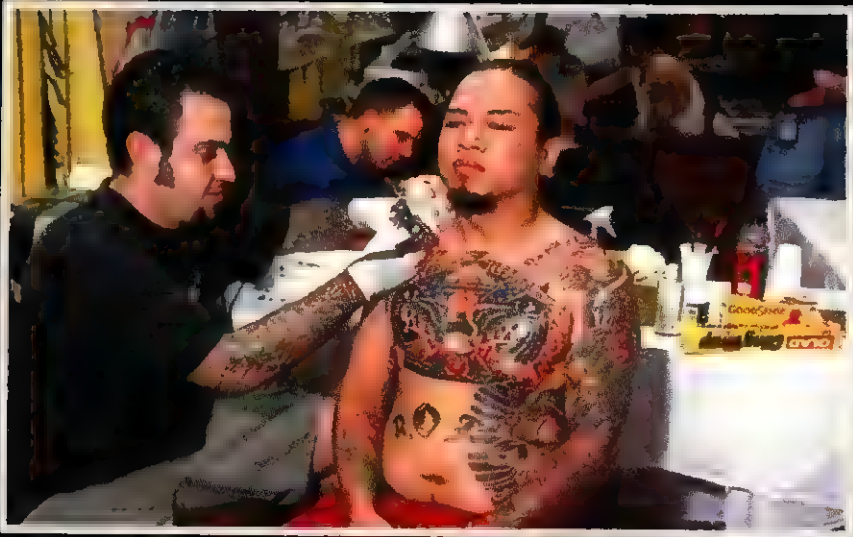








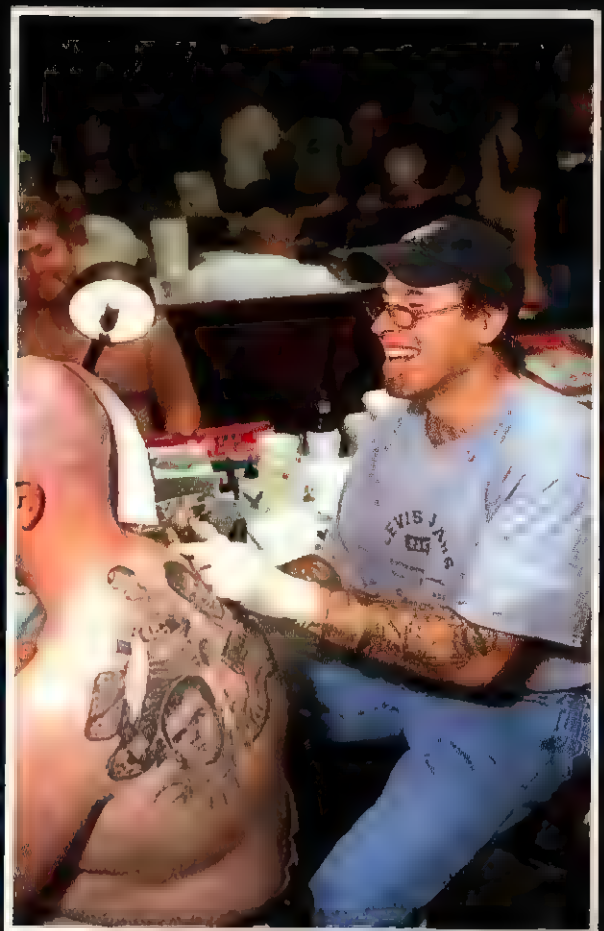
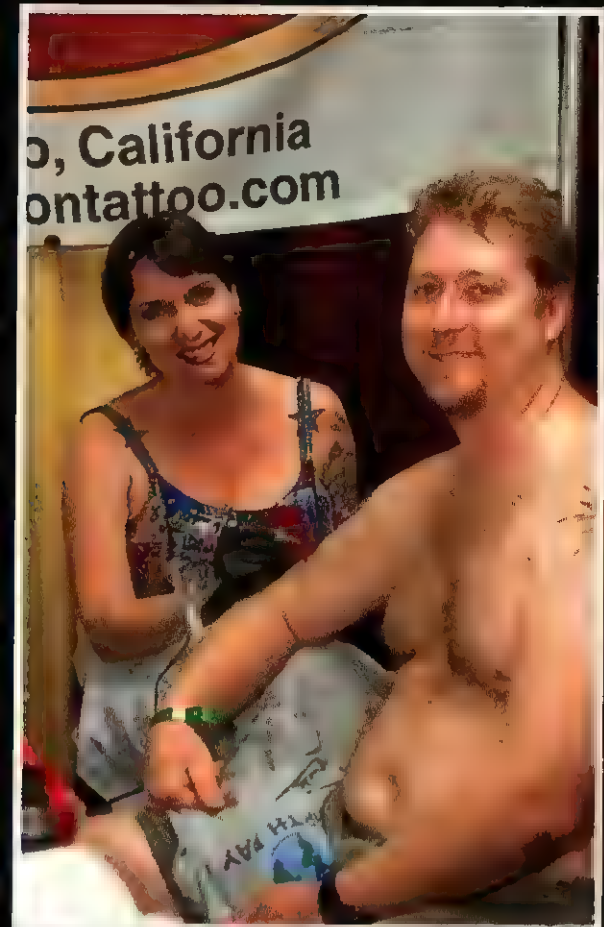




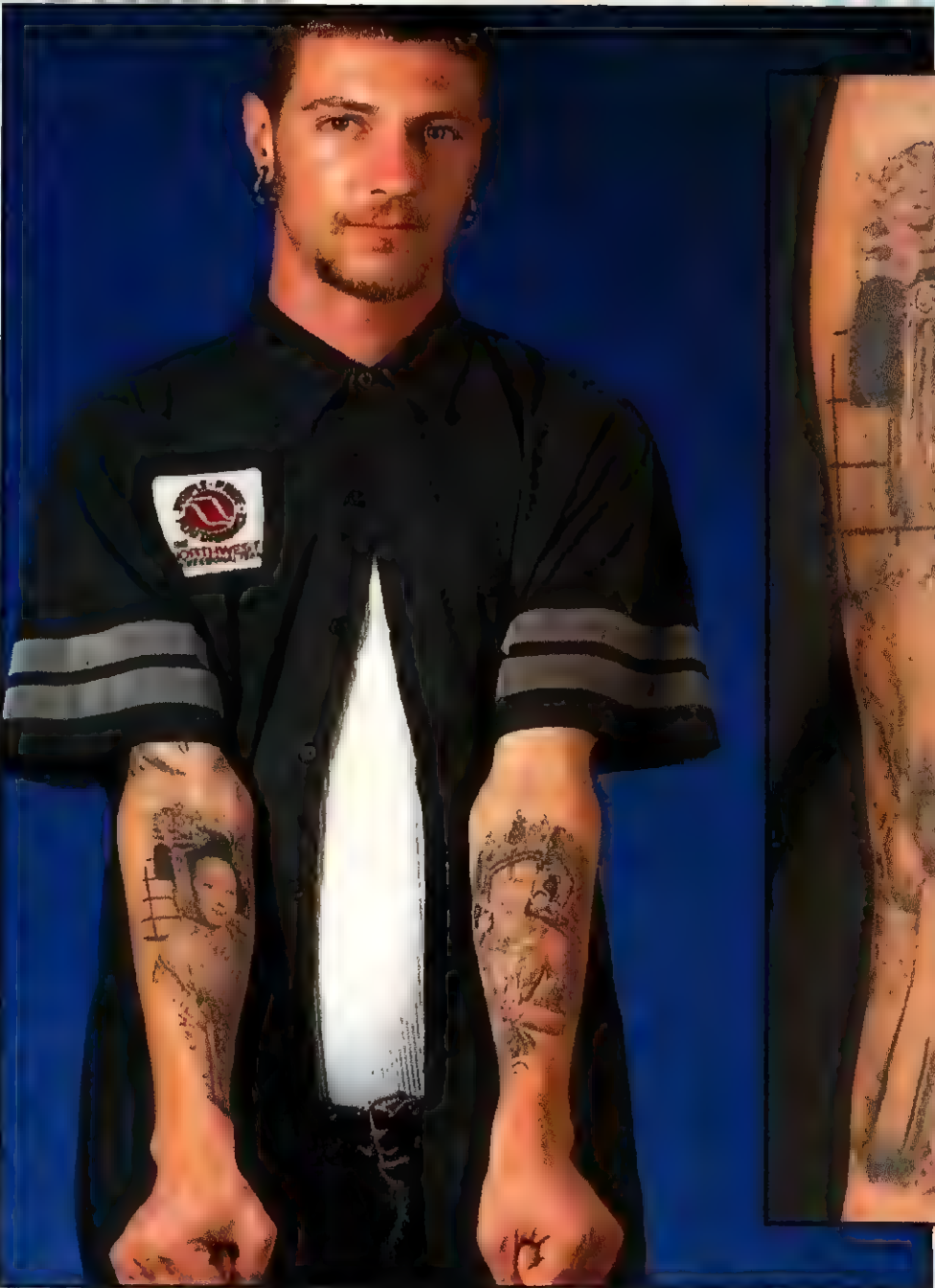








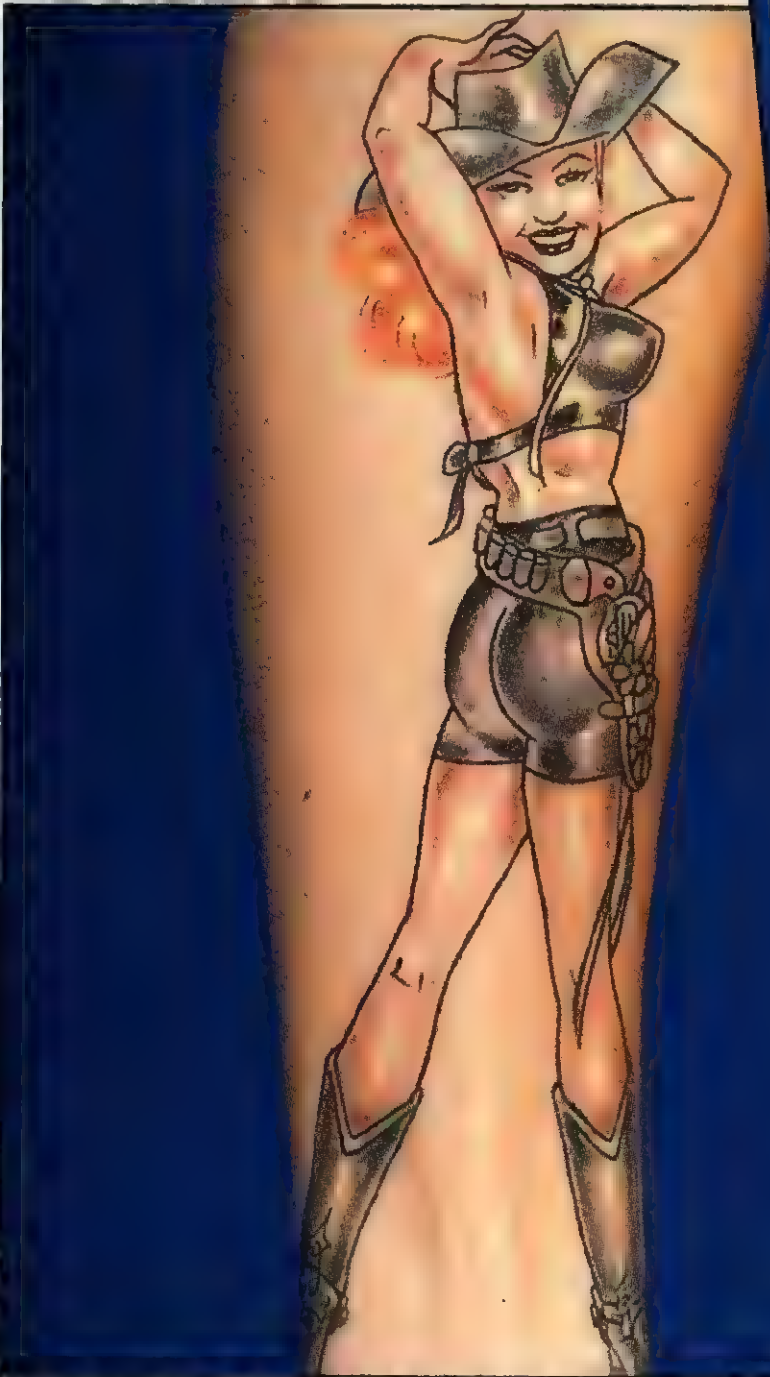












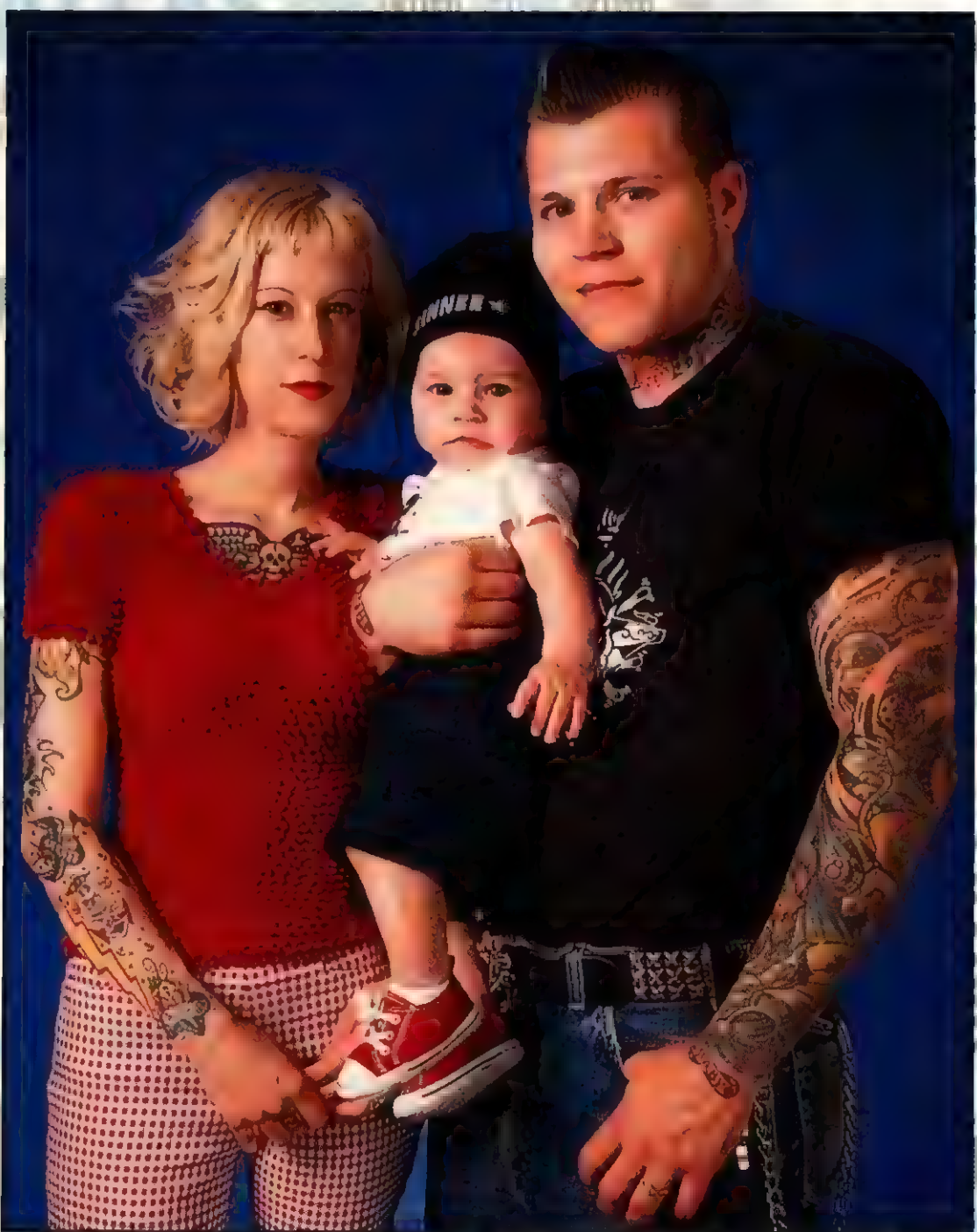
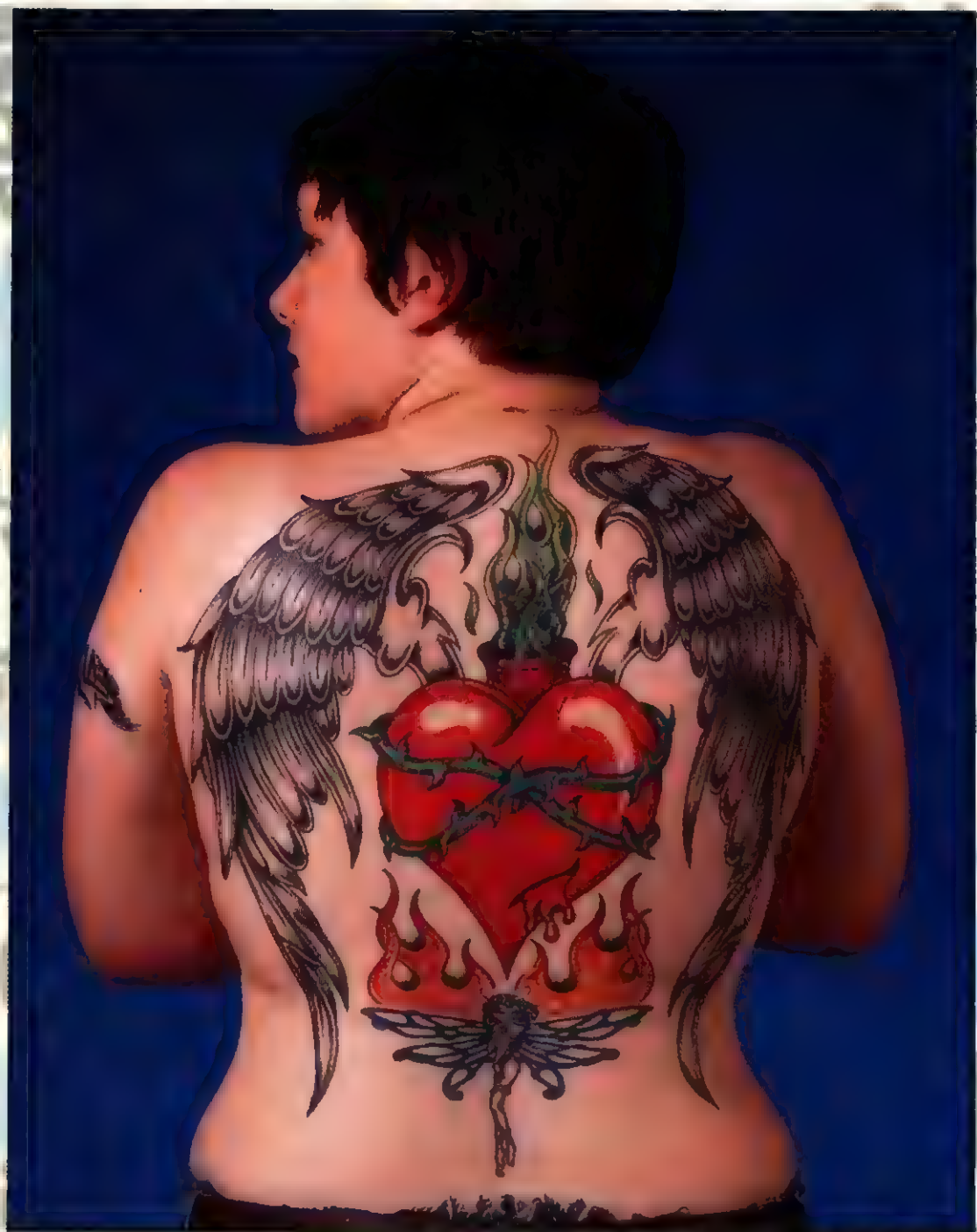








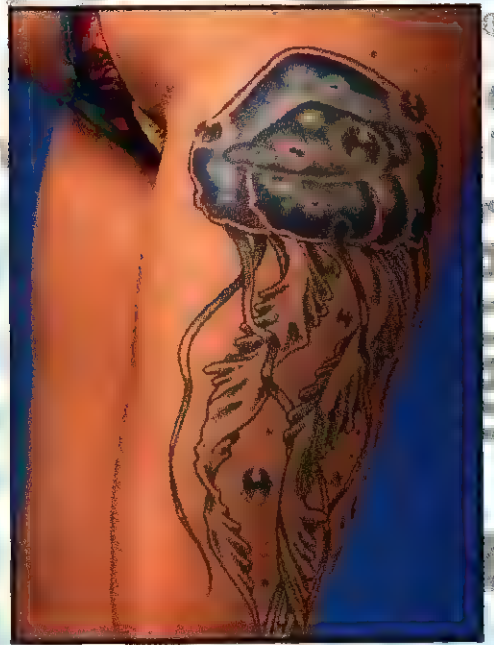
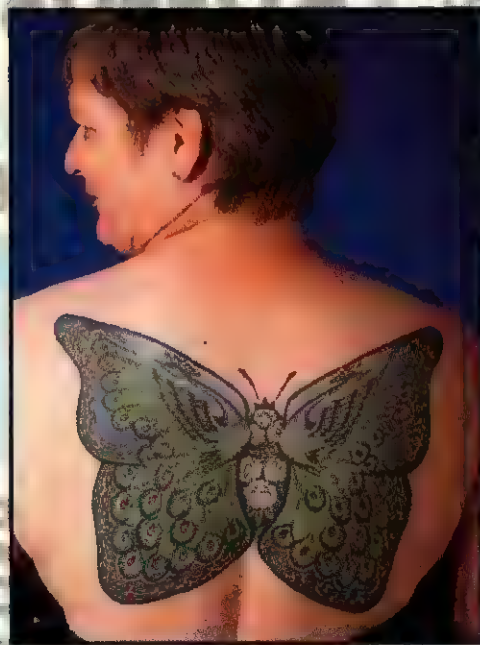
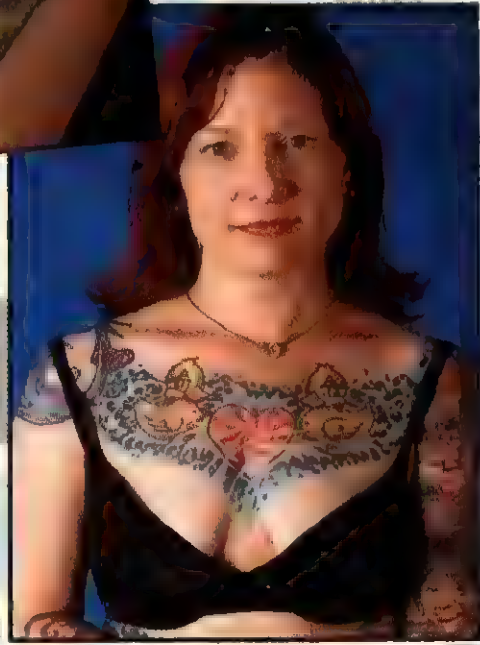




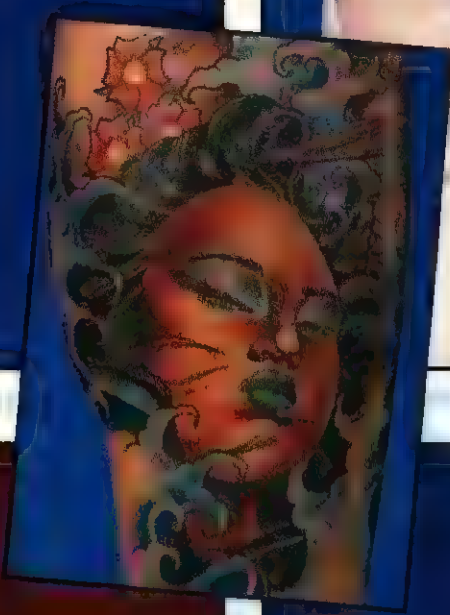
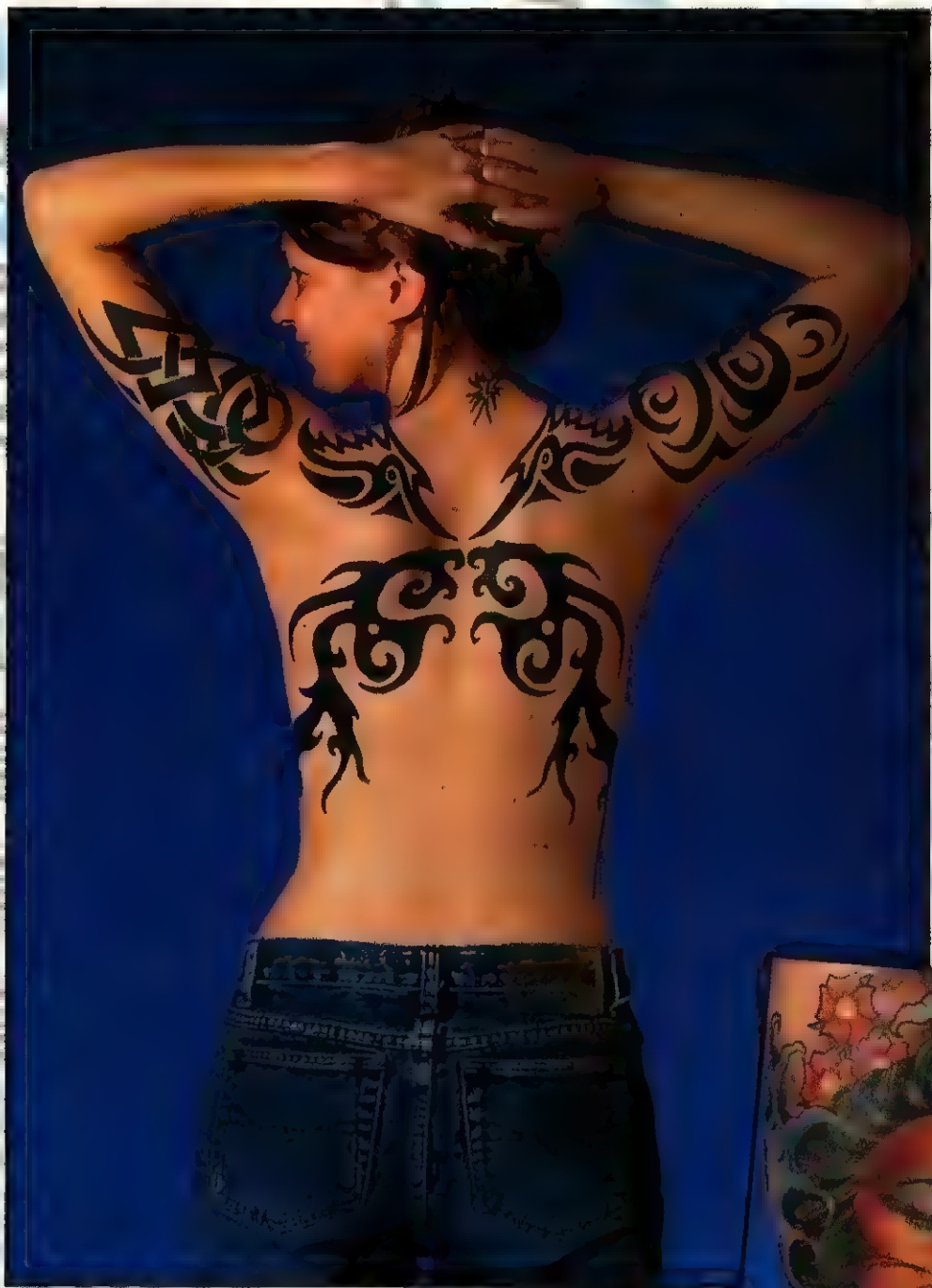








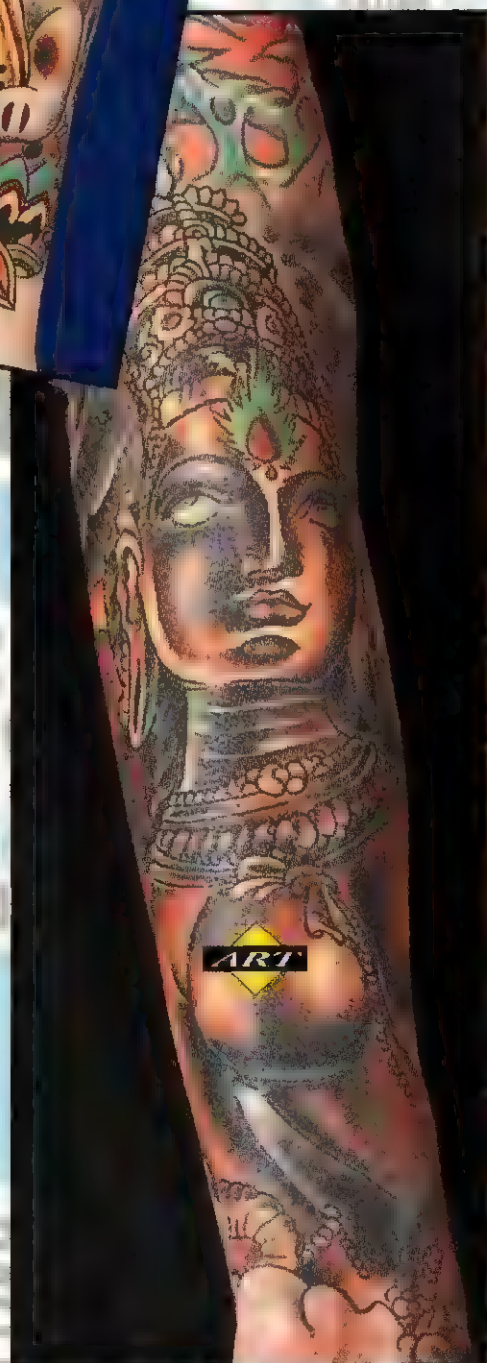








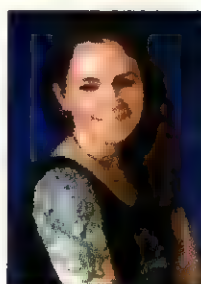








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Fort Worth, TX*



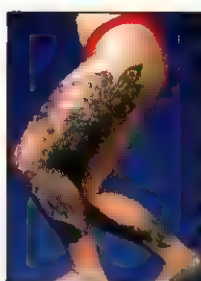
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*Doug Curtis,  
Dillon Trent  
Dallas, TX*



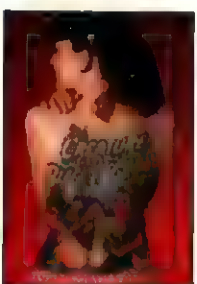
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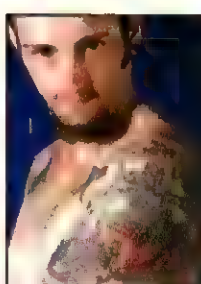
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Webster, TX*



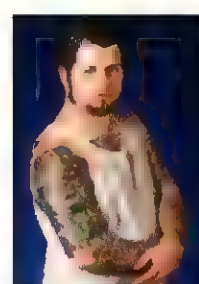
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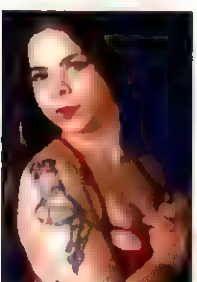
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*Adam Fuqua  
Atlanta, GA*



*Damon Conklin  
Seattle, WA*



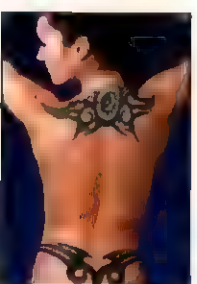
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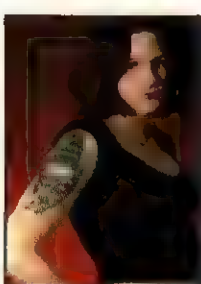
*Jeff Ersic  
Lynchburg, VA*



*Chad Lambert  
Fort Worth, TX*



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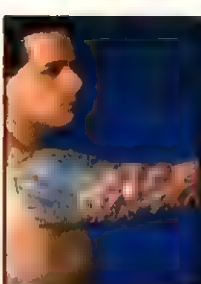
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Garland, TX*



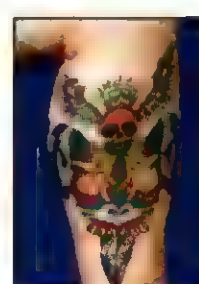
*Jime Litwalk  
Detroit, MI*



*Chad Lambert  
Fort Worth, TX*



*Jon Clue  
of Long Island, NY  
and Jeremiah Barba  
of Anaheim, CA*



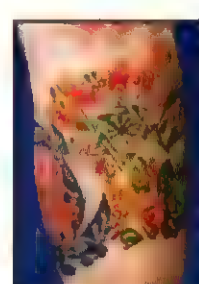
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Garland, TX*



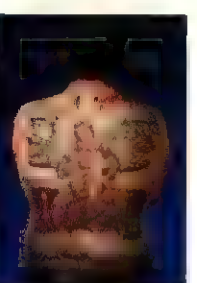
*Jon Chancey  
Garland, TX*



*Frank Lee  
Dallas, TX*



*Michele Wortman  
Marion, IL*



*Mike Peluso  
Lubbock, TX*



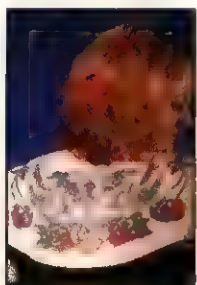
*Richard Harper  
Denton, TX*



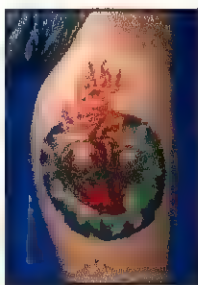
*Deano Cook  
Atlanta, GA*



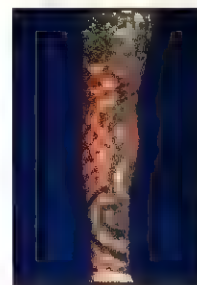
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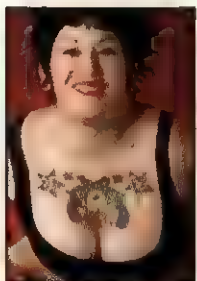
*Carl Hollowell*  
Fort Worth, TX



*Lil' Chris*  
Arlington, TX



*Nick Ley*  
Garland, TX



*Red Dragon Tattoo*  
Richmond, VA



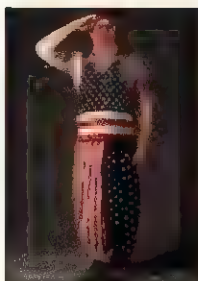
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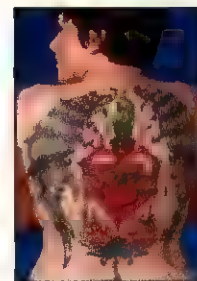
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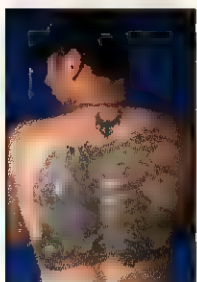
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Sandy Springs, GA



*James Smith*  
Queen City, TX



*Corpse*  
Denison, TX



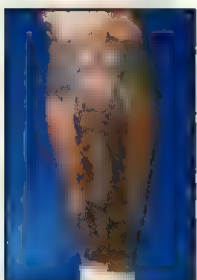
*Julian Spaan*  
Fort Worth, TX



*Jime Litwalk*  
Dallas, TX



*Tom Renshaw,  
Jay Wheeler*  
Detroit, MI



*Greg Pipers*  
Manassas, VA



*Julian Spaan*  
Fort Worth, TX



*Julian Spaan*  
Fort Worth, TX



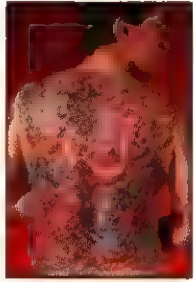
*Hannah Aitchison*  
Chicago, IL



# Artist Credits...Artist Credits...



*Cleen Rock One*  
Elgin, TX



*Adrian Evans*  
Dallas, TX



*Nick Ley*  
Garland, TX



*Stan Corona*  
Carson, CA



*Joe Capobianco*  
Seabrook, NH



*Joe Capobianco*  
Seabrook, NH



*Randy Muller*  
New Orleans, LA



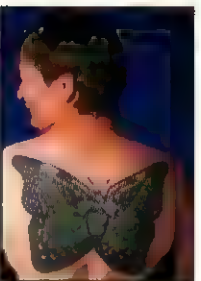
*Johnny Bolger*  
Albuquerque, NM



*Erik Inclan*  
Dallas, TX



*Megan Hooglaud*  
of Mankato, MN  
and *Paul Dhvey*  
of Harlingen, TX



*James Smith*  
Queen City, TX



*Julian Spaan*  
Fort Worth, TX



*Rachel Dowd,*  
*Jeff LaCour*  
Natchitoches, LA



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## NEWSKOOOL



**N**ewskool Tattoo is right downtown in San Jose, California, next to that city's university, San Jose State, founded in 1857. Go Spartans.

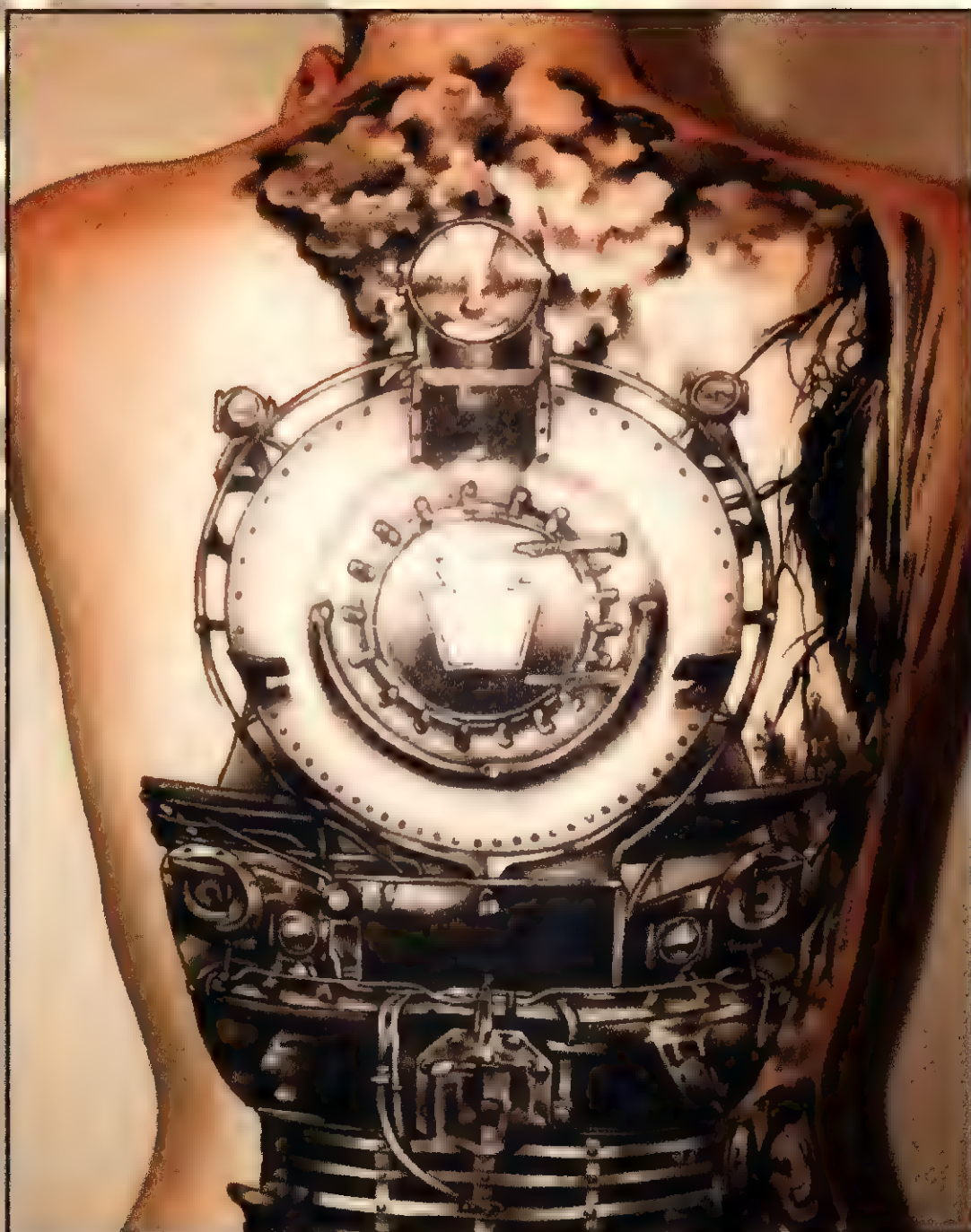
A mere four years into tattooing now, Adam Barton started drilling in his hometown of Poughkeepsie, New York—known to some of the locals as Po'town. His entrance to the business is a Cinderella tale minus the pumpkin and the mice, but including a tattoo studio called Planet New York. "I started going to SUNY New Paltz for graphic design," he said. "And I went into Planet New York in Poughkeepsie. I was actually flyering for a hardcore show that my friend and I were putting on. They liked my artwork; they'd seen it around, and they asked me if I wanted to tattoo."

Barton declined the offer. "I continued on with my studies," he said. "But when I got out of school I thought about it and started."

Barton worked in Po'town for about a year and finally decided, like so many New Yorkers before him, that he'd had enough of the Empire State and decamped for sunny southern California. "I tattooed at Balboa Tattoo in Newport Beach," he said. "I got to do a lot more custom stuff; the tattoo scene at the time in California was so much better, obviously, than the scene in upstate New York. I tattooed there for about a year and a half and gave a lot of tattoos away because I was trying to

AT

NEWSKOOOL





build up my portfolio."

It was a bold move that paid off. He met the Newskool crew at the Anaheim tattoo convention and moved into his slot at the shop about two years ago.

Barton is an outstanding black and gray artist, a style he loves. "In San Jose, there are a lot of cholos and a large Mexican population that wants to get black and gray work," he said. "So I get to do an awesome variation of work—every day I do something different." He also loves the allied art of script names, another kind of work his clients call for often. And in both tattooing and painting he does his own brand of what was once referred to as twisted traditional—the cyclopic beheaded Jesus on his business cards, for example. "It's definitely traditional that's got some weird, I guess spooky, characteristics in it," he said. "I try to evoke some sort of weird response. But I definitely try to keep it traditional with the heavy black shading and outline." His flash designs have a heavily traditional flavor.

In his paintings as well as his newer tattoos, he's been working on a mix of traditional tattoo images and realistic art. "I'll take a traditional black, red and yellow dagger and stick it through a rendered realistic hand," he said. It's one of those mixes of art in which the sum is more than the combined parts. As art influences, Barton cites the paintings





# NEWSKOO

A D A M



B A R T O N

of Mike Davis of Everlasting, Robert Williams, Ed Roth, Tux Farrar, and a well-known guy from near his hometown, Thom DeVita. Tattoowise he cites Dan Higgs, Scott Harrison, and the guys he works with: Phil Holt, Adrian Lee and Paco Excel. Barton's apartment is in the same big Victorian house as Adrian's and Paco's, making them into a sort of nonstop "art encyclopedia," as Barton put it. Newskool recently exhibited a large bodysuit show, encompassing work by the extended collective and Newskool artists past and present.

It's worth saying that Newskool's close proximity to the old school has little impact on the shop. "We don't get much university traffic for tattoos," Barton said. He thought back for a minute; "I did one Spartan tattoo," he said. "That was it."

Newskool Tattoo is located at 306 South 3rd St. San Jose, CA 95112 (408) 279-0927, or at

[www.newskooltattoo.com](http://www.newskooltattoo.com). 

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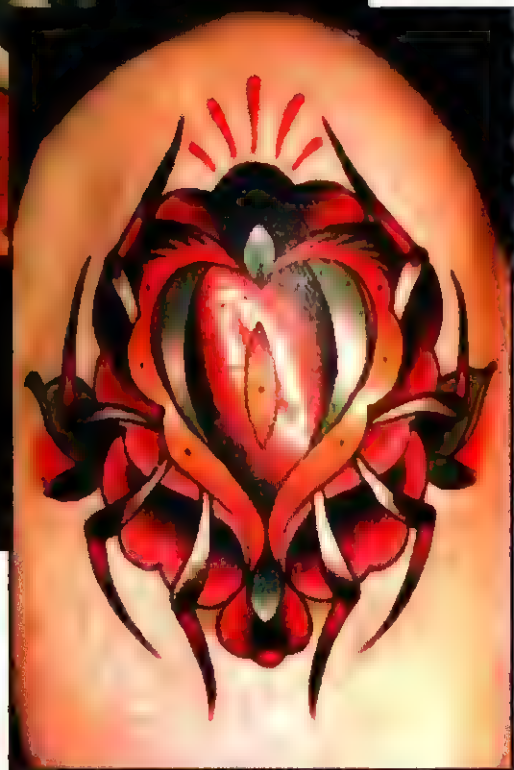
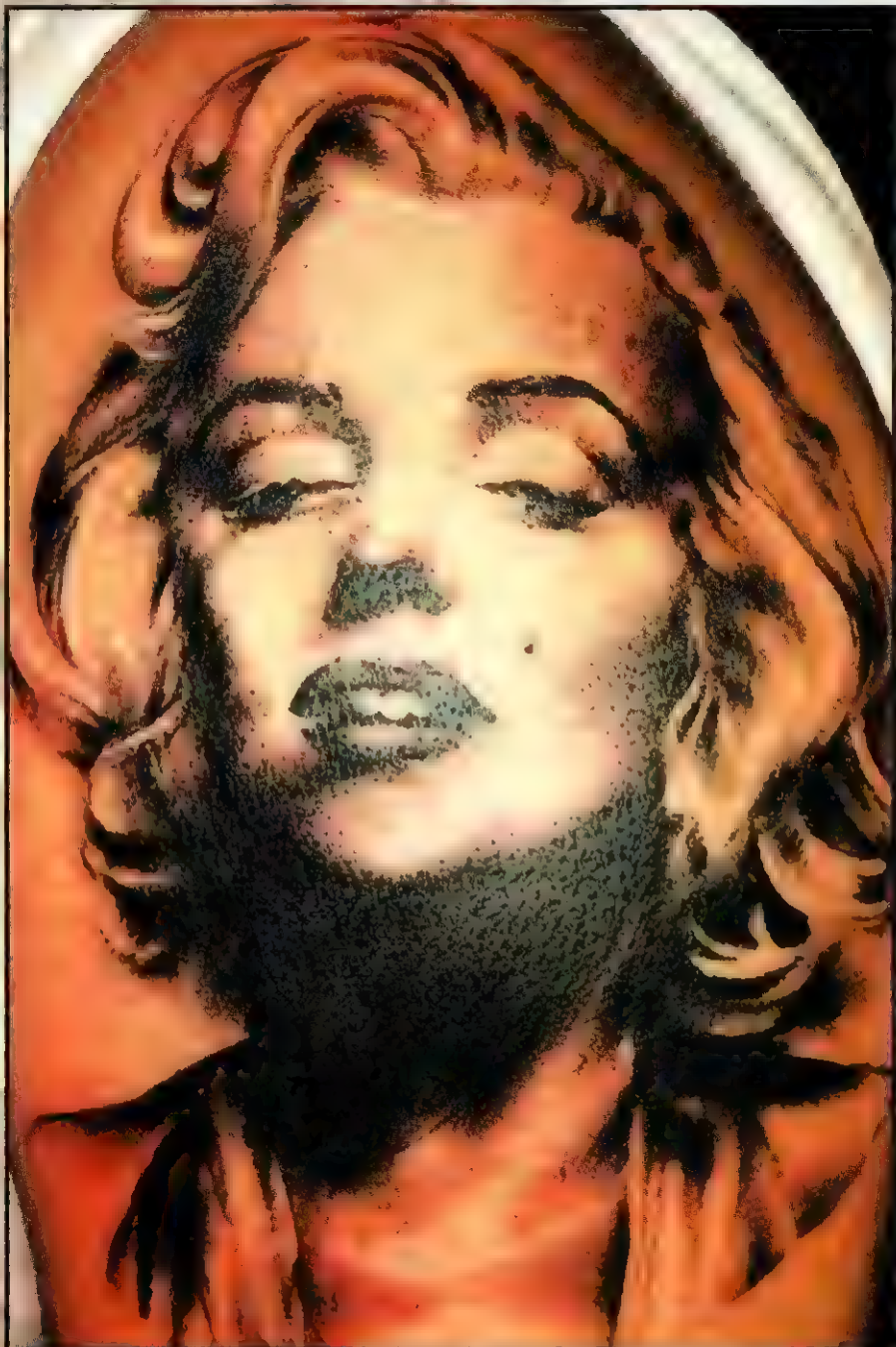




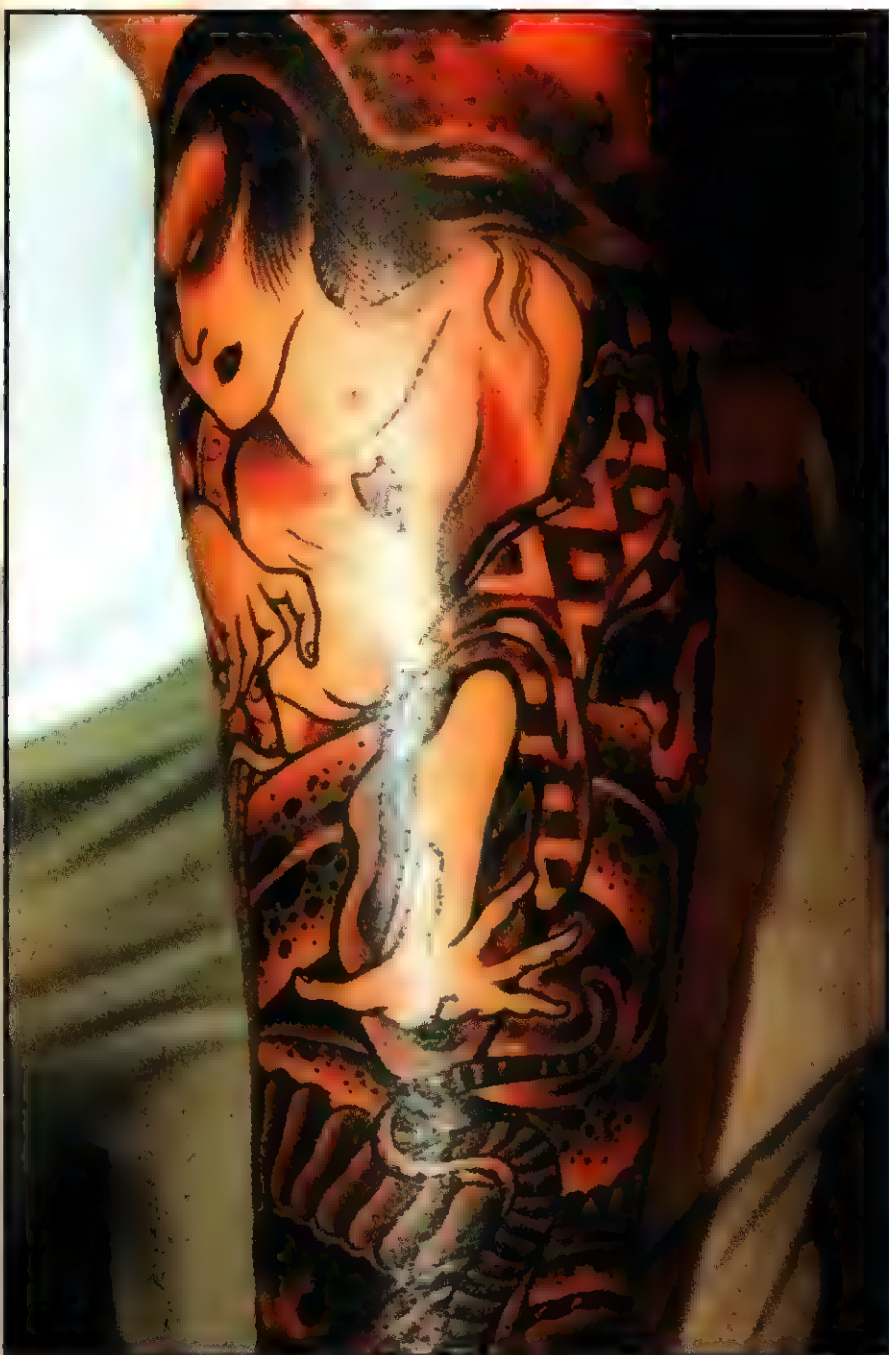
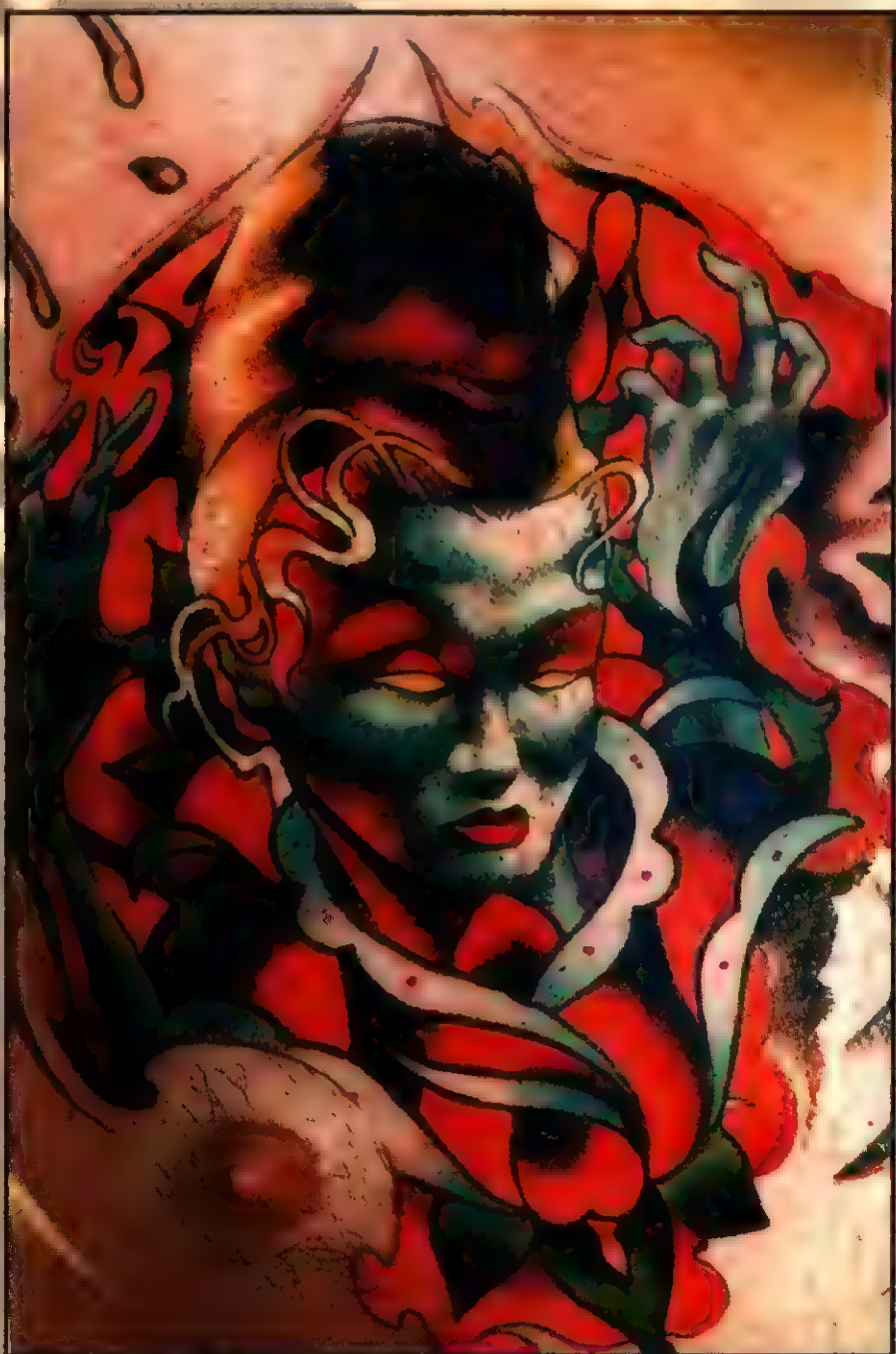
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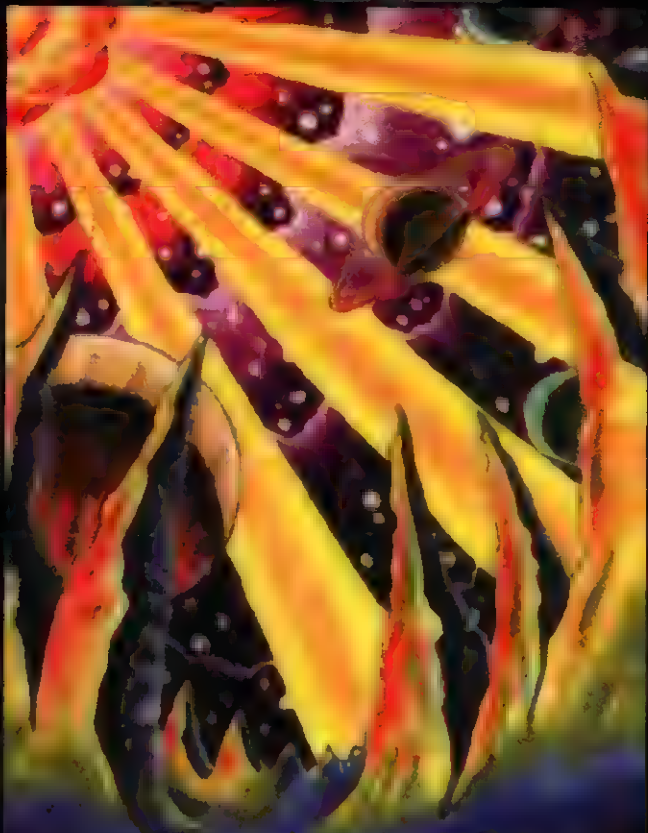
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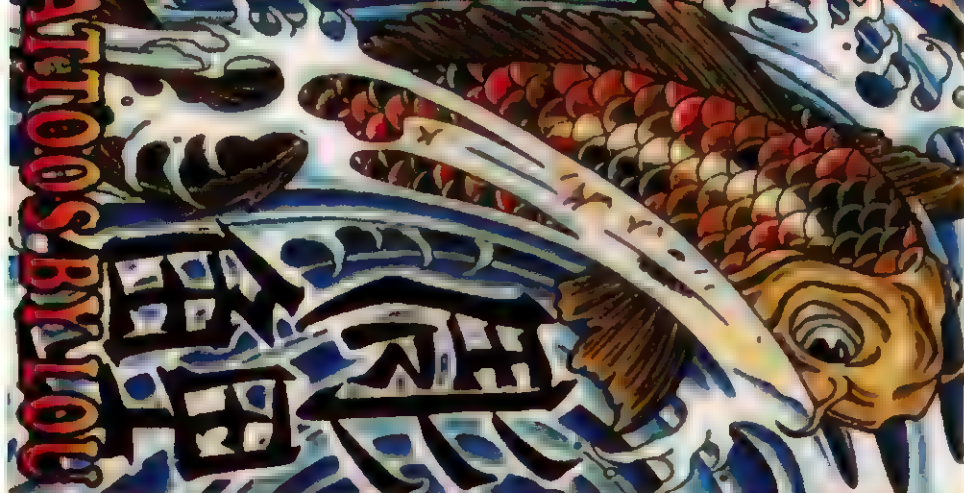
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# WATSON ATKINSON

By Sherri Cullison

Photos by Bill DeMichele, Watson Atkinson and Terry Allen

## It seems like Watson Atkinson's name

is creeping up everywhere, and if he isn't known by his name alone, being half of the "Twins of Pain" scoots him along the tattoo grapevine quite nicely.

Increasingly recognized for his work, Watson has been collecting tattoo convention awards for several years now, while seeing his work appear in the industry magazines with increasing frequency. Besides his burgeoning reputation in tattoo, Watson also works in every other medium he can. He draws in graphite and charcoal; he creates curious collages, paintings, sculptures and installations.

Dedicated to taking on as many different styles as his days allow, Watson's passion for the visual image seeps from every medium that he chooses. With eight years under his belt as a professional tattooist, Watson will only admit that he's just recently come into his own artistically. While he's admitting that, though, he's doing it with genuine down-home gusto.

It's hard to tell what makes Watson go. Having known him for 13 years, he's still hard to describe. Obsessive is close, but it isn't the word for him. Successful and satisfied, probably, but not complacent enough to ever take a break from creating something new or from moving forward. Despite all of the words that might capture his essence, it's the images that speak worlds about him. Watson's work carries with it a sense of utter, and maybe even painful, completion. You can see in it every last detail, down to the breath taken between the strokes.

And whatever it is that drives him, he's been like this forever. When he tells his story, he carefully chooses his words, contemplates how he will deliver his message, and relates even the most miniscule of details.

For instance, there was the portrait of Luke Skywalker that Watson did that his teacher hung on display in his first grade classroom. It was this initial moment of gratification that sent him onto an explosive path in art. He took to drawing everything he laid youthful eyes upon, and he got in trouble every step of the way for drawing in his classes, instead of studying. He entered art contests and won; he filled notebooks with sketches of women, of friends, of his ideas. Equipped with only a sheepish high school grin and a big dream, his work finally started to get him somewhere in 1991.

He won a two-year scholarship to Columbus, Ohio's College of Art and Design. His obsessive desire to create seemed right on par with the heavy curriculum. But

when the free money ran dry, Watson had to transfer to Indiana University's art program, where he could more easily afford the tuition. At IU he quickly grew frustrated with the program: "The university's art department was not impressive. Looking in hindsight, I now see that it was a great disservice to force freshmen into a major. All I heard from art school students was: 'I'm going to be a sculptor' or 'I was destined to be a painter.' And on and on. I truly wanted to study every artistic subject. It was forever frustrating





to choose only sculpture, with little time left for a minor course of study."

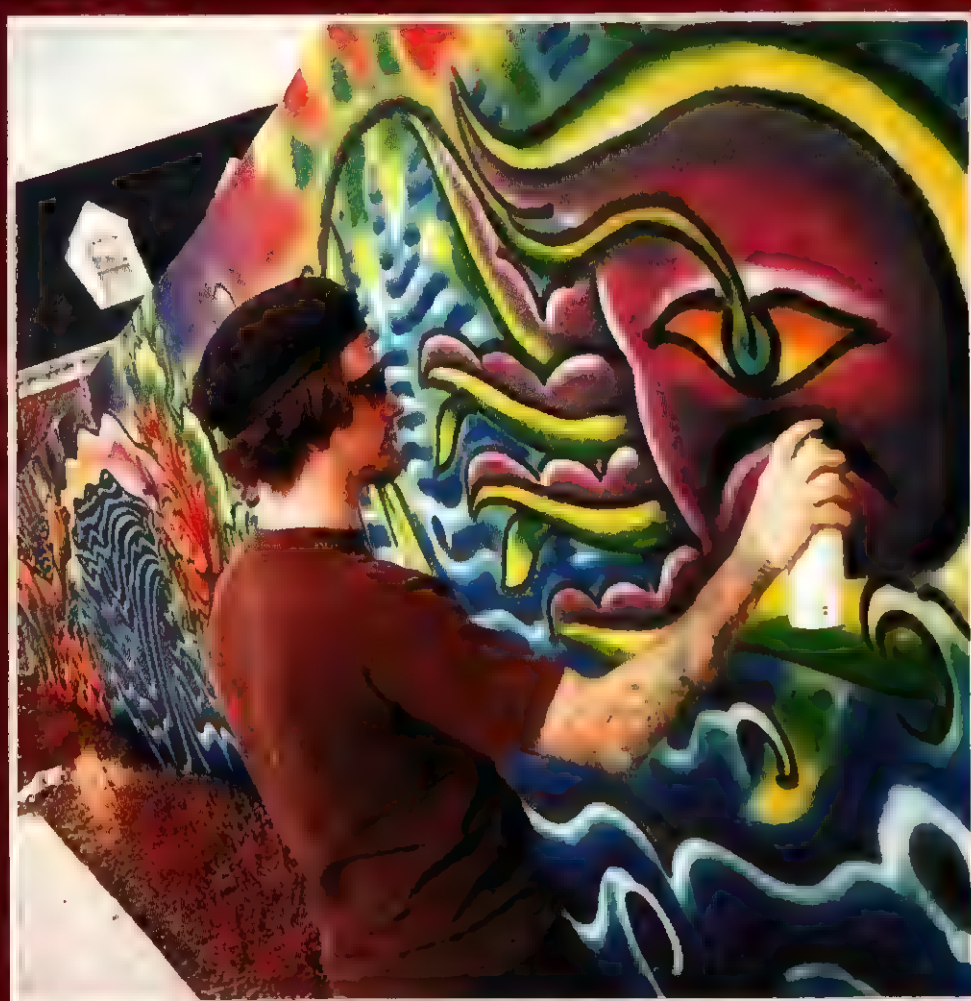
This frustration eventually led to his leaving the art program altogether and moving into tattoo. "It culminated in my last semester at Indiana University. I spent this time with a painting teacher who severely criticized me for working in different styles. One week I would try my hand at a cubist-style painting, then another in an impressionistic style. She once threw me out of class for the day. Why? I was caught drawing in my sketchbook instead of painting."

The otherwise quiet and concentrated artist made a grand, albeit drunken, exit from IU's program with a Jackson Pollock-like gesture. In the school's studio, Watson intentionally destroyed one of his paintings and the entire studio, leaving gobs of paint and a trail of paint-covered handprints on all four walls of the classroom. "I left an offensive and controversial mess for my final critique the next morning," he said. "I wanted to give her a last symbolic 'kick to the face' for not supporting my varied directions; it was my undeclared exit show. In a vindictive and sarcastic tone, she called me a dilettante, a jack of all artistic trades, but master of none. Not until years later would I accept that my vocabulary is not isolated in one style or medium. On the contrary, it is as varied and diverse as possible."

Graced with impeccable timing, Watson's twin Mitchell had just sold his motorcycle and bought tattooing equipment. "We were both eager to get into the real world," Watson said. "When I first held that tattoo machine and ran my first shaky line, it was like love at first sight. From that moment, I've been under its mysterious spell. I am forever indebted to Mitchell for making that adventurous move, and to our friend Matt Stephenson for the constant encouragement of our work. Within a few months, Mitchell and I were playfully plugged as 'The Twins of Pain.'"

The "Twins of Pain" moniker stuck. Within a year, Mitchell and Watson completely gutted a 1971 school bus and loaded into it a queen-size bed, a couch, a dining room set, a stove, and their tattoo equipment.

With their dog, Calcutta, they headed down the highway as traveling tattoo artists plus one. In Athens, Georgia they met tattooist Savic Enn, who was in the process of winning a fight against the courts to make tattooing legal in Athens. Athens







quickly became their home. They rented a space on Washington Street adjacent to the famous 40-Watt club, and Pain and Wonder was born.

Word spread quickly. Pain and Wonder was, and still is, the place to get inked in town. After six years of owning the street shop, the boys moved on. They sold the shop to Cap Szumski so that they could escape the rigors of running a business and concentrate on tattooing. Mitchell and Watson both tattoo by appointment only out of their studios at home, and both are still busy with a steady clientele.

With tattooing, Watson was able to really flex his art muscles. "Ever since the early days," he said, "I have envisioned being versatile in dozens of stylistically different genres. In fear of burnout, I never wanted to get locked into an exclusive area of tattoo design.

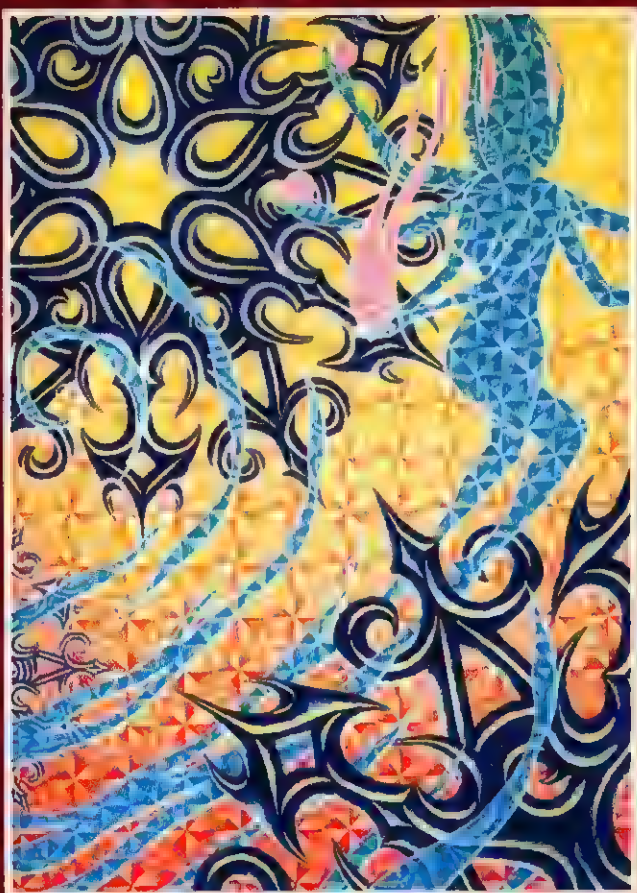
I have explored its full scope, from heavy graphic black, to photorealism, to the full color-bomb pallet, and everything in between," he said. Whatever the style, Watson found his tattoo forte in what he calls "extensive, elaborate projects."

"It's not that I don't enjoy smaller work," he said. "It absolutely has its place. To me, there is a magnificent and epic quality about more extensive work. It's like the difference between a quick study in the sketchbook and an exhaustive painting project that takes months to complete. The two are completely separate worlds. I'm just partial to the latter."

Never allowing a lull in a conversation about his art, Watson quickly continued: "I envision the designing stage of the tattoo as similar to the liberation of being in my studio space at home. I like to be adventurous, reckless, and daring while at work. And I adamantly believe that it's in this uninhibited atmosphere that true





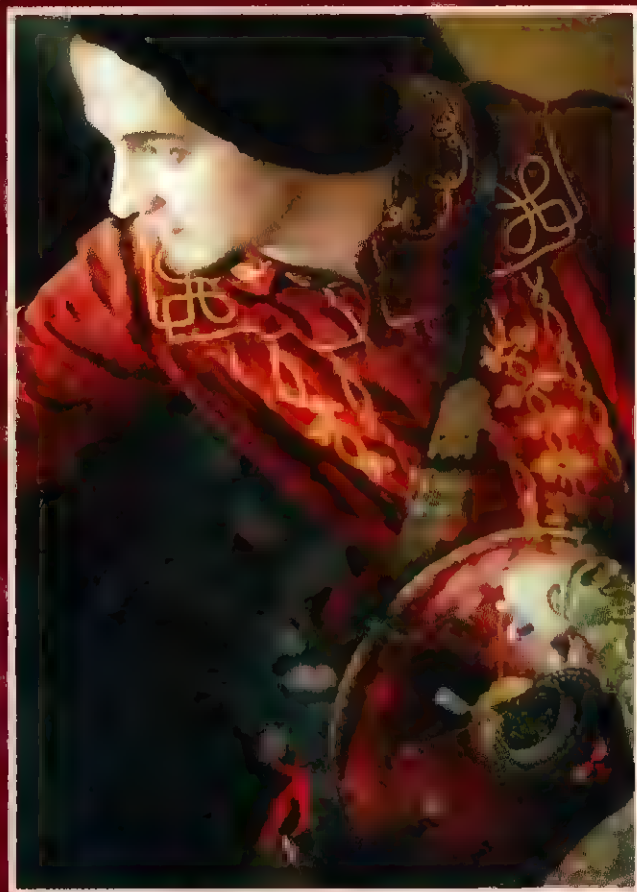


innovation occurs."

When designing custom tattoos, Watson often asks his customers for key words or ideas. "All I need is an agreement that I can be free to arrange the composition. As a tattooist, I am in the graphic arts industry. And like it or not, I am an artist for hire," he said.

As an artist, Watson credits the surrealists as having the most formative influences on his art career, but he admits that they are now dim lights in a growing company of other influences. "I still consider myself an artistic realist with a heavy lean toward the fantastic," he said. "But I've developed an interest in dozens of movements, artists, and ideas. My recent work consists of the most diverse projects I have completed to date. They cannot be classified into one area. My new direction was inspired and solidified by a shattering show I viewed during the spring of 1999."

Gregory Gillespie's retrospective show at the Georgia Museum of Art in Athens was the show that finally validated Watson's earlier struggles with art. Pieces in the Gillespie collection presented an abundance of different mediums, techniques, and ideas, all







cobbled together.

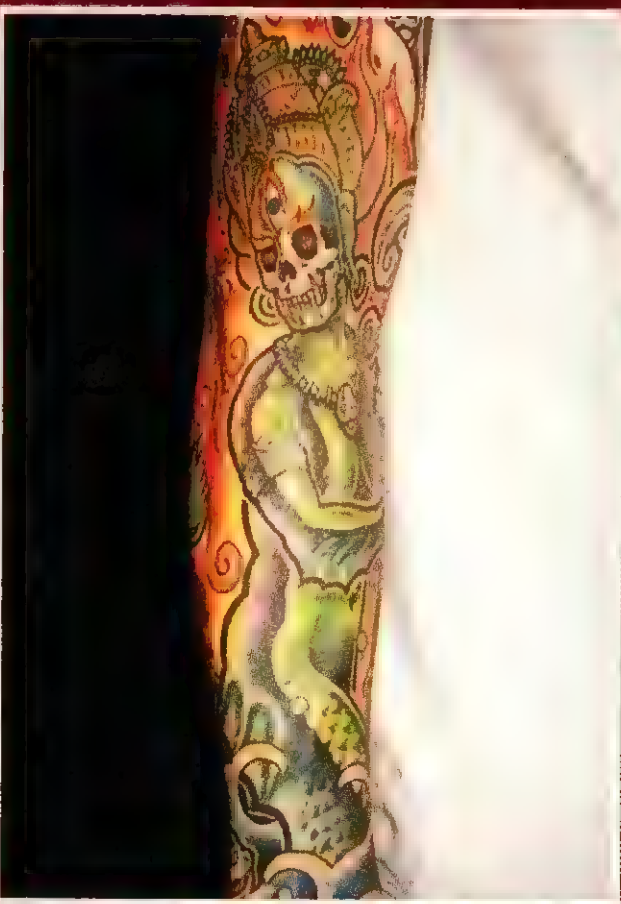
From this, Watson's floodgates opened. "Gillespie's work communicated to me that the walls can dissipate, allowing all artistic disciplines to be mixed into an enormous and diverse melting pot," he said.

"Gillespie [figuratively speaking] kicked that painting teacher in the face once more. He liberated me."

Watson will talk about his art for as long as you'll allow him. Memories of him fast-forward through the numerous sermons over the years that I've known him. I see him talking feverishly over dinner, in an empty parking lot, sitting above in the branches of a budding tree, as we cross the street together, and from behind his pulpit of a tattoo machine. He is always ready to discuss his art, his vision, and, I suppose, he is also hoping to find someone to understand.

He speaks with passion. His work screams with it. Graphite figures sing of it. Tattoos, stretched over hundreds of natural canvases, move and shake with it. His oil paintings hang in silent indulgence of it. His collages and installations draw you in, hint at it and whisper his name: Watson Atkinson, forever free to be adventurous, reckless, and daring. 🎨

To contact Watson Atkinson,  
visit his web site at  
**[www.blndsght.com](http://www.blndsght.com)**  
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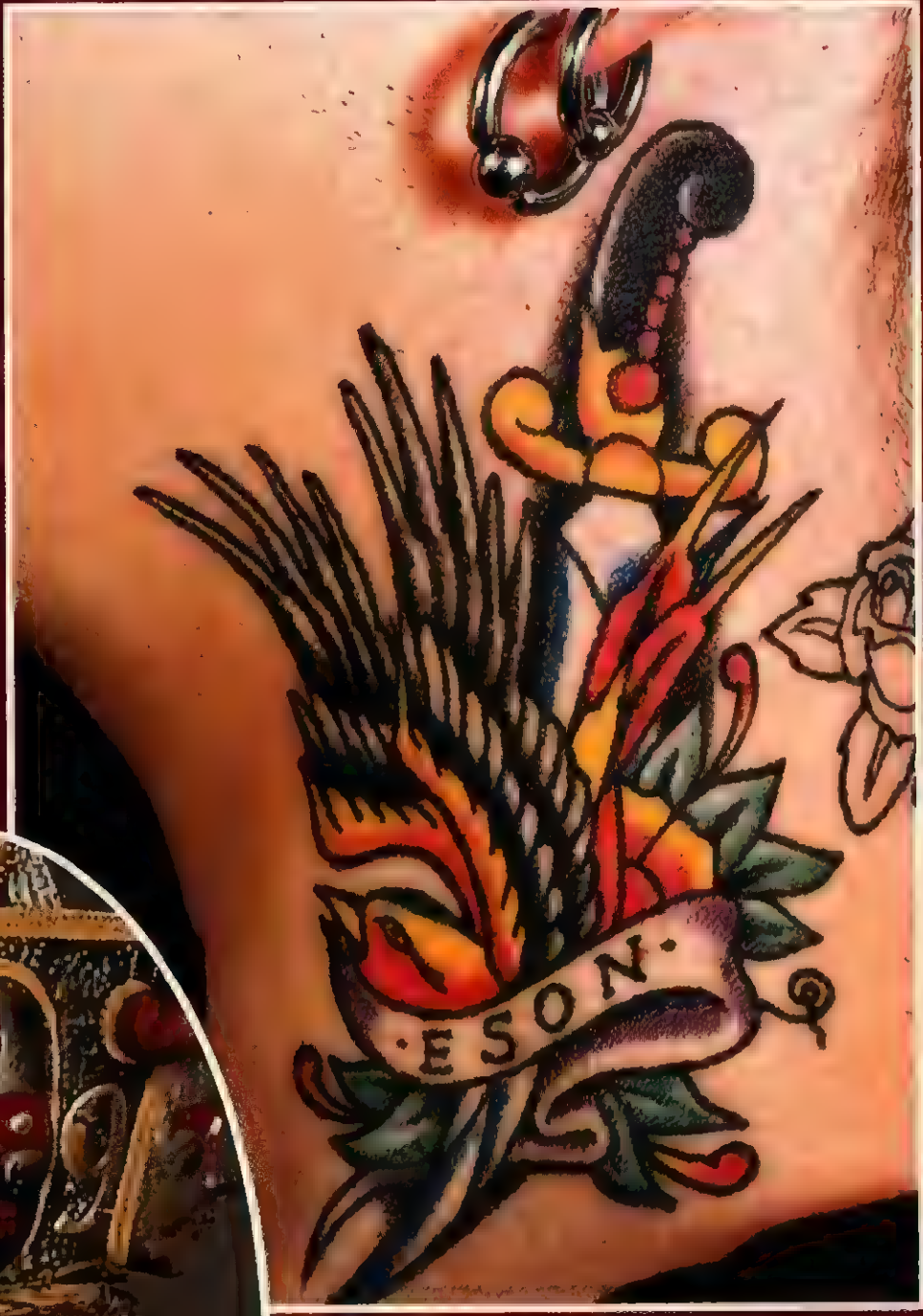






















# REVIEWEWS

By Chris Pfouts



## The Red Box

The Phantasma-Allegorical  
Portraits of Stacy Lande

\$24.95

Last Gasp  
San Francisco

**Y**ou don't have to look too hard to recognize Pandora's Box as an allegorical rendering of the vertical smile that is the central focus of a good Man's Ruin grouping. And Stacy Lande is, by the photographic evidence offered on page 10, blessed with natural red hair. From the combination, I reckon, you get the book's title.

The only reason for dragging Pandora's coot into it is that Lande herself quotes *Webster's Dictionary* on the subject as an on-ramp into her thoughts on her collection of paintings.

With Stacy Lande, it's difficult to separate art from artist. Even Robert Williams, a man who can shoot straight to the beating heart of

things both graphically and in prose, is unable to completely separate the cheese from the cake in his Foreword to *The Red Box*. Stacy and her paintings have a towering theatrical component, an observation that is absolutely to be taken in a good way.

As a seasoned artist and performer, Lande understands precisely how her work fits the modern social frame. She offers a gem-like pedigree for lowbrow (and tattoo) art: "Breaking from an entire century of art designed to alienate the average non art-educated individual, the art-of-the-vernacular movement is growing...." And she likewise clearly maps its future: "To create art that is as direct, engaging and accessible as film and music videos is the driving impulse behind the new allegorical work being created today."

Painter and writer Lisa Petrucci observed that "Stacy's work reads like a photo album from Hell." Or Los Angeles, where most of Lande's subjects reside.

These are, you see, portraits of real people cast as archetypes, and they are at a zenith of graphically confrontational work. Lande paints with old-master's layering techniques, on wood panels, and her characters stare right into your eyes. Divided into elemental categories of Fire, Earth, Air and Water, her portrait's expressions are by turns predatory, amused, lustful, aching, challenging, even stunned, like a bloodied accident victim seeking a telephone.

The paintings collected in *The Red Box* have a visceral effect like a boot in the stomach, or a little lower. Don't miss this book.



## Pushing Ink

The Fine Art of Tattooing  
By Spider Webb

\$19.95

Schiffer Publishing  
Atglen, PA

**T**his is a paperbound re-issue of the long out-of-print 1979 original. It's a piece of history, an undiluted, non-revisionist 190-page snapshot of NYC hipster tattooing a quarter century ago. For this grand porthole into the past, \$19.95 is a bargain. An original hardcover edition will cost you five times that.

But ... there is a but here, and it's as big as Aretha Franklin's.

*Pushing Ink* was a groundbreaking work 20-plus years ago, but today it looks dated. All the cosmic stuff about tattooing as performance art or conceptual art was a little silly even in 1979. It's completely silly today.

But—again with the but—in the late 1970s, tattooing was just barely



rising from skid row. Webb's tactics were damn good at generating coverage from the mouth-breathers of the alternative press, and getting the attention of praise-anything-they-don't-understand highbrow art writers. Conceptual art was a way to showcase tattooing for people who had never even thought about taking it seriously before. Even if he couldn't make the highbrow art crowd embrace tattooing, Webb at least got them to rub up against it.

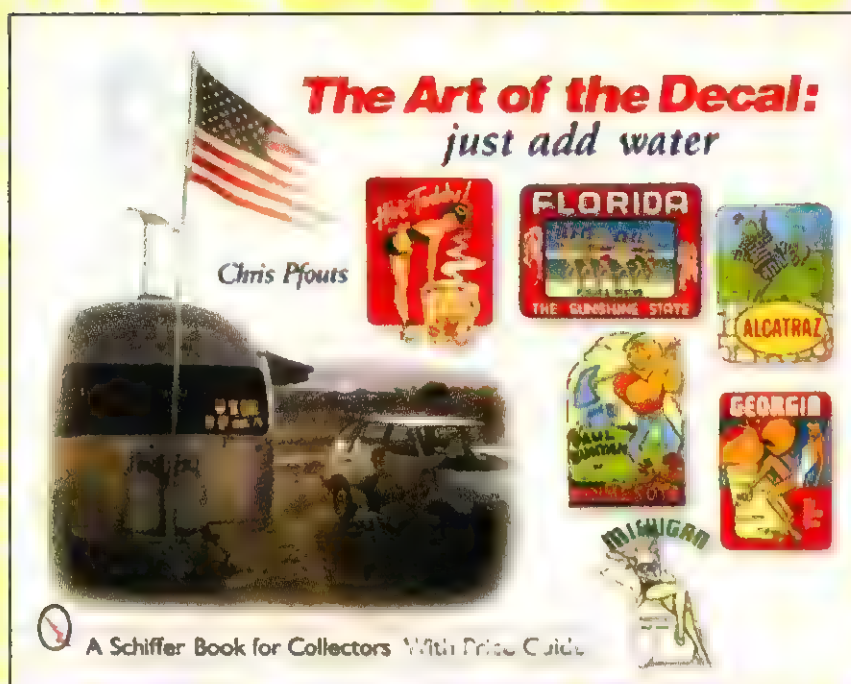
The question is—through the clear lens of hindsight—why? Dashing after every new art flavor that lands on their little crackers, the ninnies of the gallery world are more fickle than teenage girls. Tom Wolfe magnificently chronicled this whole more-money-than-brains New York art scene, and his writing about the "culture buds" is absolutely hilarious. I'm sure that Spider knew these gallery wankers' opinions were worth precisely dick in the streets. I'm also certain that he knew the future of tattoo would lie where its past was—in the streets, not the galleries. Whether Webb's highbrow forays had lasting merit or not, it sure looks like he was having fun.

Spider is truly gifted when it comes to combining fun and publicity. I went to a party at his Sixth Avenue studio around 1982. The party was mentioned in the New York *Daily News*, allegedly as a wingding in memory of Michael Stewart. Stewart was a young black graffiti writer who had died in police custody.

In reality the party was no such thing, of course. It was just a party, and I spent most of it getting drunk with Legs McNeil. In the litany of Spider Webb press notices, this one barely rates—it's just the one I happened to be on hand for.

*Pushing Ink* does have a healthy supply of rare photos, including a portrait of Detroit oldtimer Mel the Head, good vintage photos of Vyvyn Lazonga, Elizabeth Weinzirl, Janis Joplin, Lyle Tuttle, and pictures of a very youthful Hanky Panky, circa 1978.

If you want to know how tattooing got to where it is today, *Pushing Ink* will give you a few pieces of the puzzle. Any well-stocked tattoo bookshelf should contain a copy.



## The Art of the Decal

**Just Add Water**

By Chris Pfouts

Foreword by Anthony Ausgang

\$19.95

Schiffer Publishing

4880 Lower Valley Rd.

Atglen, PA 19310

[www.schifferbooks.com](http://www.schifferbooks.com)

### GUEST REVIEW

By Kelton McMullen

**T**his book is a genuine first—there's nothing else out there like it. If waterslide decals are new to you, this book will open your eyes to a gold mine of fantastic and formerly forgotten lowbrow art. If you already dig decals, you'll find a gallery of old friends and images. *The Art of the Decal* has plenty for everyone.

And it's plenty cool, too. Waterslide decals carried art to millions of Americans from the days when a horse was considered rapid transit through the late 1960s. And they were as popular as cold beer in July—even pin-up master Antonio Vargas designed decals, and waterslide decals were an elegant medium of portable imagery.

More than just decoration, decals provided a way to put colorful art and lettering onto things that wouldn't fit into a printing press. Industry used them for labeling and logos; in the home they decorated furniture and appliances. Travelers bought them as souvenirs, embellishing car windows and

luggage with graphics. And of course, kids and teenagers spanked decals onto everything within reach.

ITA's editor Chris Pfouts has been collecting decals for more than 20 years, and this book showcases the cream of that collection, with more than 300 of the best and wildest images. This book is

filled with aliens, robots and monsters, girlie decals, travel and souvenir pieces, hot rod and speed equipment decals, advertising and business decals, and 50 images from a mystery man named Monte, who was the best 1950s lowbrow artist you never heard of.

Most of these decals have been out of print for 30 years or more, and in many cases the images are unavailable anywhere else. "There are a lot of similarities between tattoo flash and decals," Pfouts said. "Both are little scraps of art, orphan images that have a ton of visual punch and meaning, but aren't part of any bigger work." There are at least three generations that have grown up since decals were phased out, and this book will open a lot of doors for visual inspiration.

*The Art of the Decal* will be one of those books you come back to time and again, and tattoo artists can make great use of it as reference. At \$19.95, it's less than a dinner for two, and worth much more.

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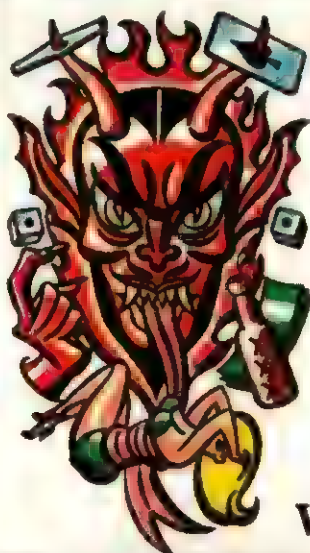


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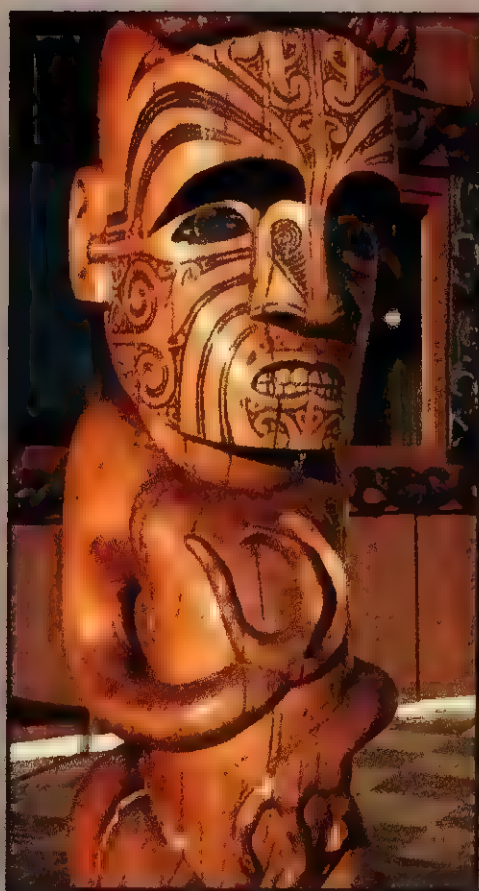
Text and photos by Dale Rio

## Samoa and New Zealand Conventions

**A**s in numerous places, Christian missionaries have long sought to suppress native customs in and around Polynesia. Samoa is the only Polynesian island to have enjoyed a strong, continuous tattooing history. Many Samoans embraced Christianity, but they saw it as something to incorporate into their culture, not something to replace it. After the missionaries' arrival in the early 1800s, traders soon followed, encouraging intertribal warfare so that they could supply all sides with weapons and ammo in exchange for land.

Soon all of the land was spoken for, (in fact it was discovered that German, American and English interests owned 1,700,000 acres on the 800,000 acre island group), and schisms ensued. To settle this, in 1899, England bowed out and took control of the Solomon Islands, while America and Germany split Samoa. The eastern part of the island and Pago Pago remains an American holding to this day, but in 1914, at the outset of World War I, Western Samoa was occupied by New Zealand expeditionary forces, in whose hands it remained until it

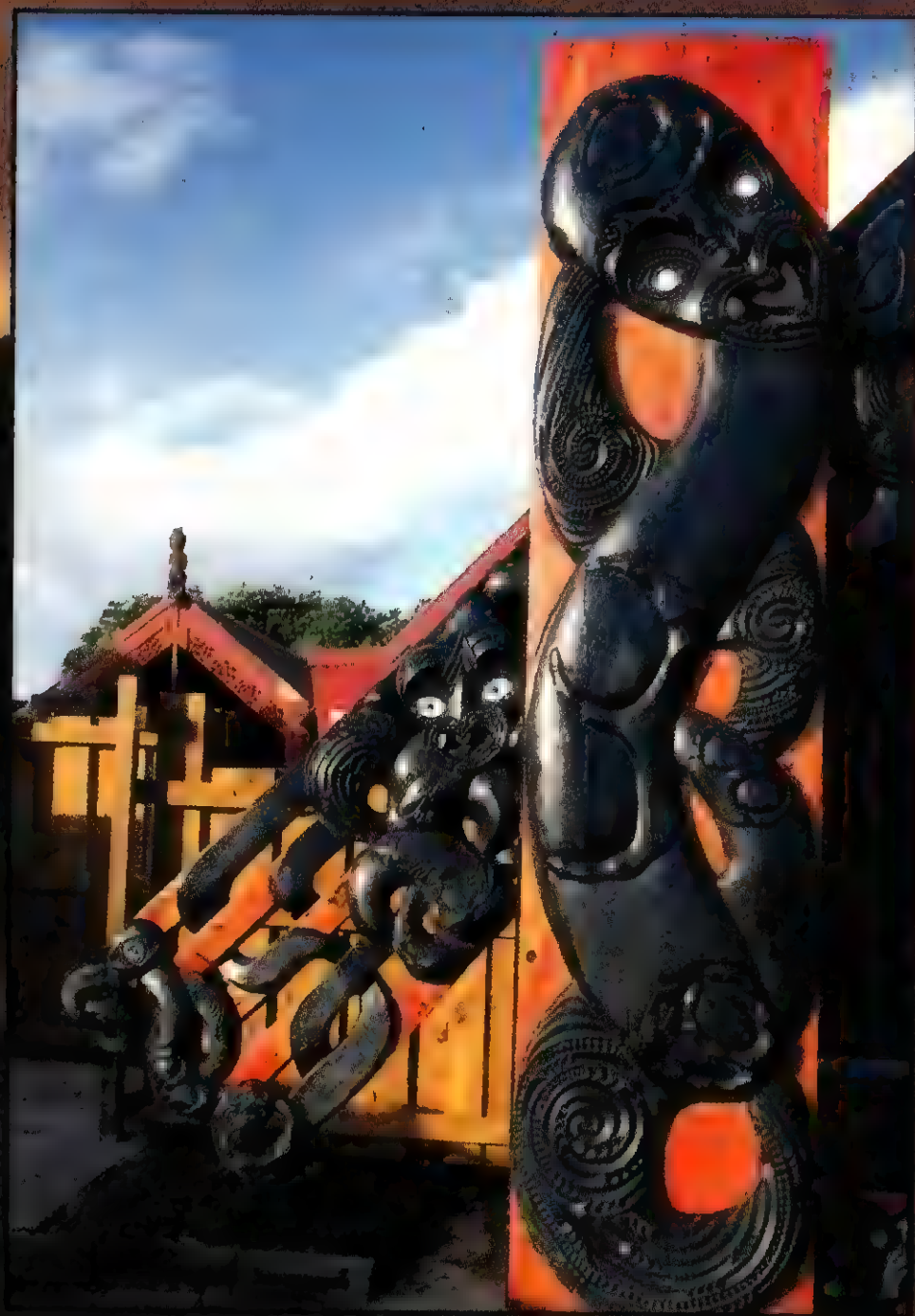
was granted independence in 1962. The German rulers had











little tolerance for missionaries, and actually encouraged tattooing rather than outlawing it, and the occupying kiwis followed suit. The fact that the practice was never outlawed played a large part in its survival.

So it's with this strong sense of history that the tattoo tour of Samoa and New Zealand kicked off in Saleapanga, Western Samoa.

I flew into Apia, the capital of Western Samoa, in monsoon-like conditions at 1 a.m. on a Sunday night. All flights in Samoa seem to arrive or depart at ridiculous hours, and I was relieved to have made it at all, considering the hurdles placed in my path. I bought my ticket directly from Polynesian Airlines for a flight that left on Saturdays, not Sundays. They put me on stand-by on a later Air New Zealand flight that I made by the skin of my teeth, but I soon found I was ticketed only as far as Tonga. A deft scribble of a sharpie righted the situation and set me and my bags on our true course. Finding my way to a cheap hostel, I met a girl who was to be filming the convention, and who clued me into its whens and wheres.

After a few hours sleep I checked out Apia a bit before meeting up with the others for the parade through town and opening ceremonies. After the reception, we headed out for Saleapanga in a wooden bus packed with drunk tattooists and Samoans. The two-hour ride was memorable as we were forced to wind our way through mountains in a torrential downpour.

Once in Saleapanga, we were all housed in small fales located right on the beach. The sun rose on one end of the beach and set on the other, and each rising or setting was more spectacular than the last. We were fed and watched over by the families who owned the fales. The conditions would be considered rough by Western standards. There was little privacy, and the bathrooms, located across the street from the fales, were more like outhouses. These accommodations became an issue for some who thought the registration fee was unusually high for such simple conditions. A few visitors arranged their own accommodations in nearby resorts or hotels, and a few others actually







left Samoa altogether, unhappy with the overall conditions, which were organized by the Ministry of Youth, Culture and Sports.

The next day brought the official start of the convention. It was very relaxed, held in open-air fale across from the ocean. Traditional tattooists worked next to those doing machine work, and for the next four days, the air was filled with the sound of aus tapping and machines buzzing. Since Western Samoa is a poor country, visiting tattooists relied mainly on the barter system for payment, encouraging people to bring items made by themselves or their villages; woven mats, for instance, are a traditional form of payment.

This system broke down to the point where some locals started bringing trinkets bought at roadside stands instead of what would be perceived as sincere offerings.

This instilled a certain amount of disillusionment in some tattooists, who decided to turn the trip into a vacation and tattoo only at their leisure. Others worked hard all week regardless of what they were or weren't offered as payment. Since I had no preconceived ideas regarding money or treatment, I enjoyed just being in a new place. I went for walks in the morning, while it was still relatively cool, and photographed as I went. In the afternoons, I devised ways to escape the profound heat by napping in my fale, swimming, or going for canoe rides with the village kids.

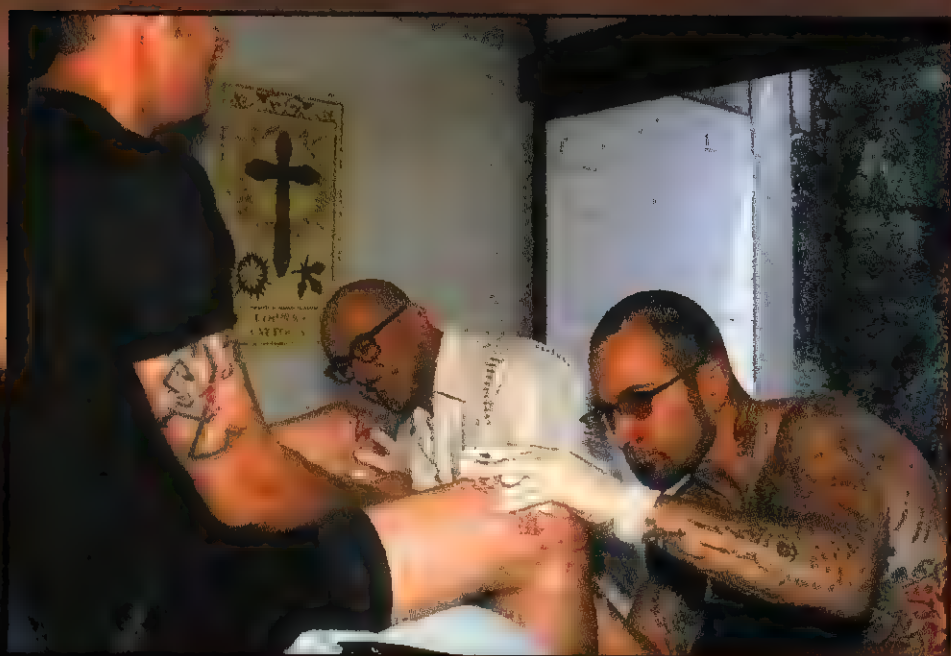
I shared homemade meals with my fiesta fale family; they served us dishes made with taro root and leaves, potatoes, pumpkins, mangoes, bananas, grapes, and coconut, all freshly picked, as well as what seemed to be Samoan delicacies, like Cup O' Noodles and Spaghetti O's. At night people socialized in their fale, at the one restaurant/bar in the village, or at the fia fias (parties) hosted by the village. One night we had an umu, a style of cooking where meat and vegetables are wrapped in taro leaves and baked inside a pile of rocks. I also spent a lot of time watching the tattooing, photographing, and pitching in to help fan people when the heat and flies got to be too much.

Even though there was a certain amount of tension between some of the tattooists and the organizing body, there were some truly amazing people in attendance. Another wrestling match with Polynesian Airlines took me from Samoa to Auckland, which was the site of the next leg of the tour.

## NEW ZEALAND

Unlike Samoa's historic contact and interaction with Europeans, New Zealand's was fraught with turmoil from the start. The first recorded visitor, Dutch explorer Abel Tasman, lost 4 men in a skirmish with Maoris in the 1640s, and 130 years





later, Captain Cook's crew suffered a similar fate. Regardless, seal hunters, seamen, and traders began to settle there, exacerbating tribal warfare by trading muskets for flax, timber, tattooed heads (which were highly prized as souvenirs) and land, which eventually led to the intertribal musket wars of the 1820's. The treaty of Waitangi, signed in 1840, established British sovereignty, but questioning of the semantics and translation of the treaty, as well as general unhappiness with it, led the Maori tribes to unite against a common enemy in the Maori wars of the 1860's and 70's.

More of their land was seized as punishment for insurrection and, after putting up a hell of a fight, they eventually succumbed to the superior British firepower. A people displaced in their own land, they also succumbed to a sort of cultural depression, and traditional arts, such as tattooing, suffered. The male moko, or facial tattoo, practically disappeared, with the women continuing the tradition into the early part of the 20th century. Fortunately, tattooing and other traditional art forms were never lost completely, undergoing periodic resurgences and being used as a sort of political weapon.

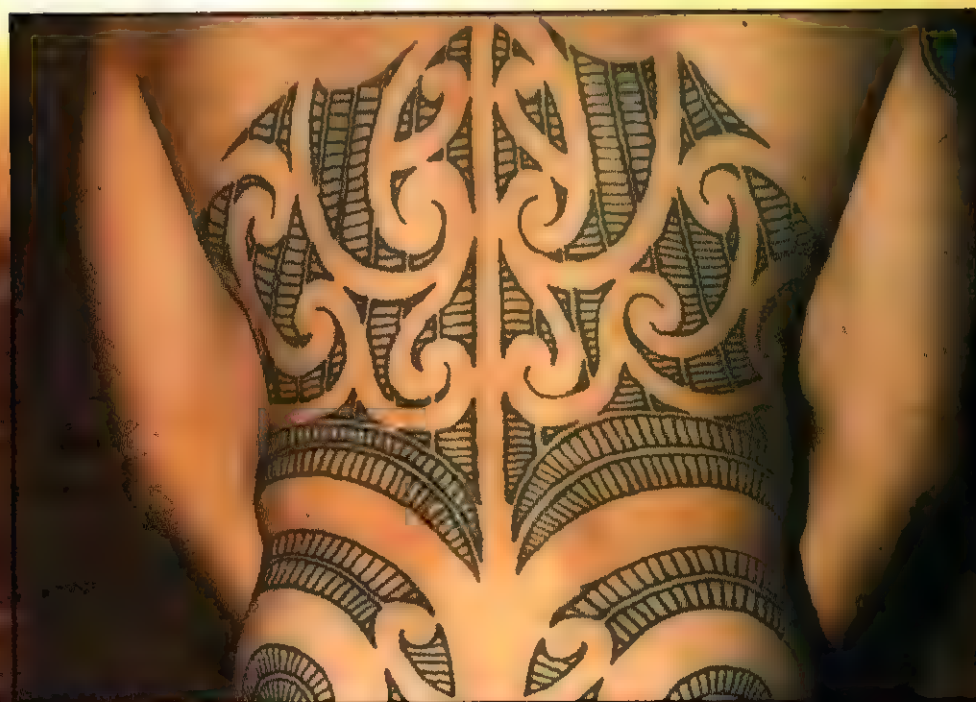
After a downswing, tattooing was re-awakened during the Maori wars as a sign of independence. Now, with Maoris gaining more power and voice within the political structure set up by the Europeans and their continuing fight for more, there is a great resurgence of language and traditional arts. And pride.

Prior to the convention in Auckland, the tattoo artists were invited to spend a night at the Okareti Marae, a site of political unrest in this century. Due to a late arrival, I missed the traditional greeting, which was a challenge put forth to all who entered the Marae.

The challenge was later put in the context of the tattoo convention itself; artists were to ask themselves why they were there, what were their goals, and what did they hope to gain? They took part in a drawing class in which Maori techniques and protocol were discussed. There were presentations by Maori artists and performances by the Marae's dance group.

Two days later, the Auckland convention began. Auckland is a large, international city, and this convention was set up more in the Western style, with an admission fee, proper booths, vendors, and competitions. All styles of tattooing were being shown off, from Maori to black and gray, blackwork to Japanese, Samoan (the largest Samoan population outside of Samoa itself being located in Auckland) and the outstanding neo-traditional work of New Zealand. The Maori presence was very much felt, with many Maori tattooists in attendance and vendors selling carvings, woven bags, and clothes with Maori-inspired design work. Maori entertainment included musicians, dancers and a






fashion show. Attendance was somewhat sporadic, with many people coming to check out the action but not necessarily getting tattooed, and Sunday held the big draw. Steve from Illicit Clothing provided impromptu entertainment for the masses by being tattooed on his knees simultaneously by Theo Jak and Mo Coppoletto.

A few days after the convention wound down, Inia Taylor hosted a hangi at his farm. Somewhat similar to a Samoan umu, a hangi is a cooking method where wrapped food is baked in an earth-covered pit filled with fire and hot stones. While we were waiting for the hangi, everyone relaxed, ate, drank and took in the beautiful scenery. As the sun sank, the hangi was ready, and the party lasted well into the night.

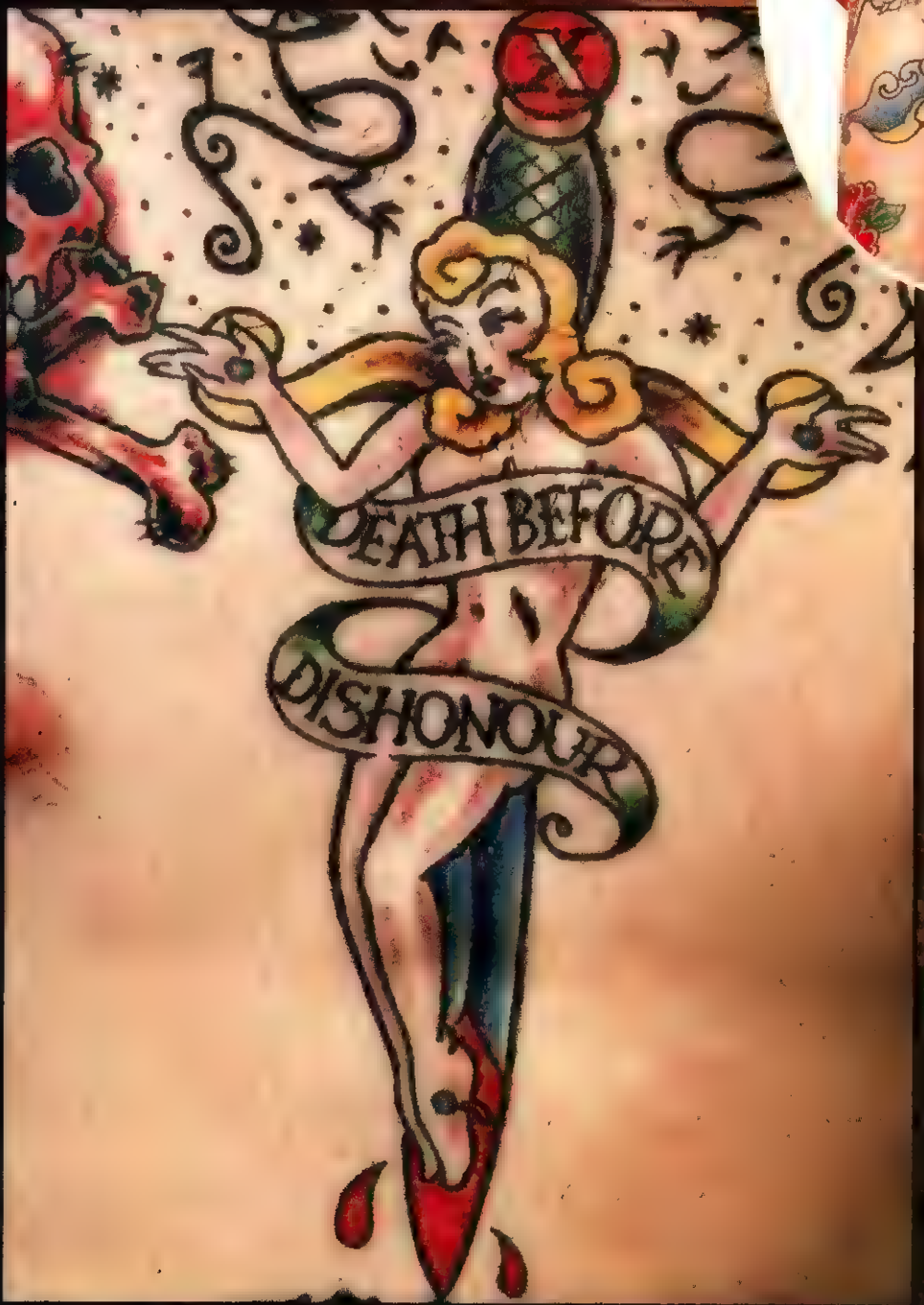
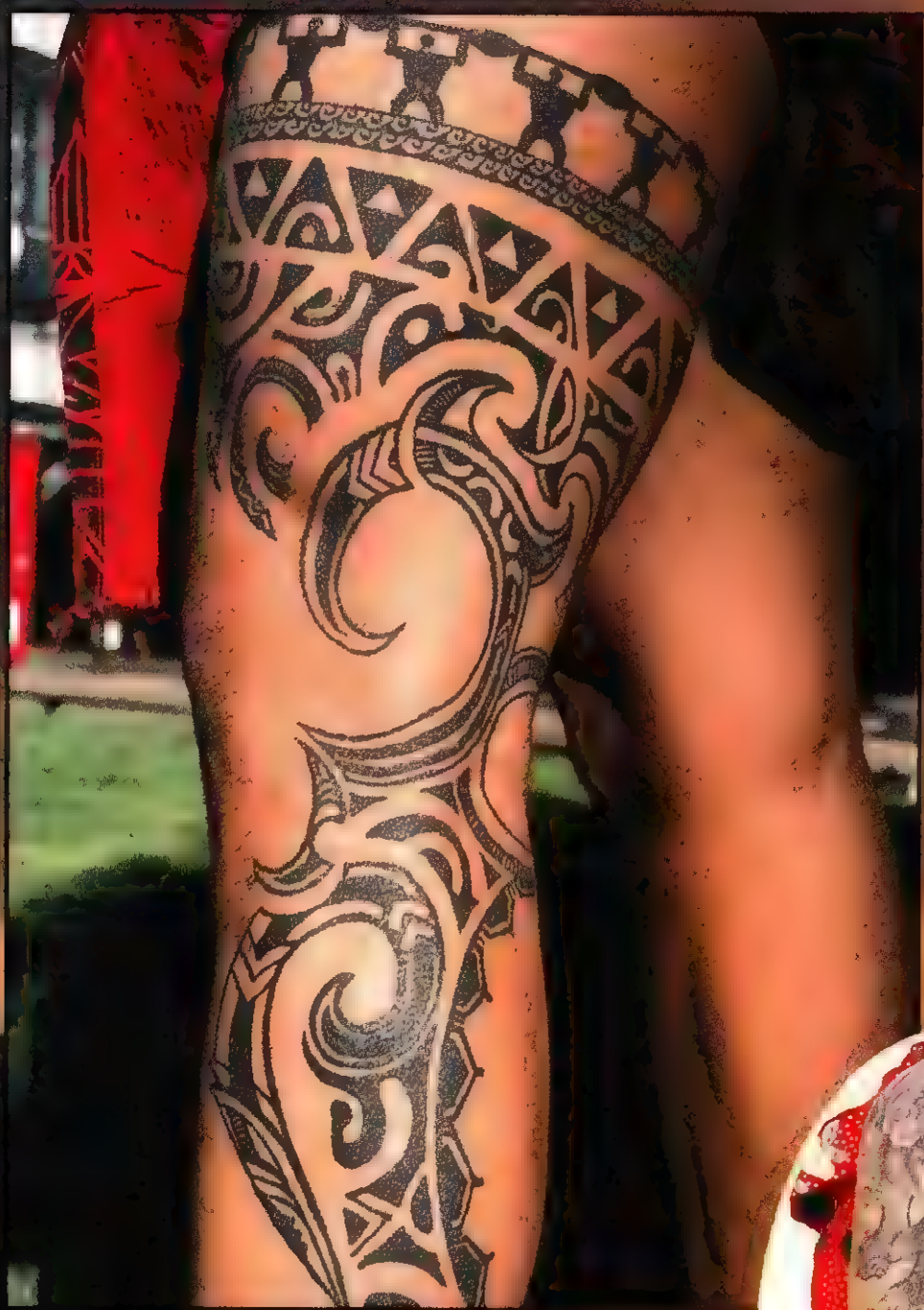
Not to be still for too long, we set off the next day, packed into two vans, for Wellington, which is New Zealand's capital city and was the third and final stop on the tattoo tour. It was a hell of a drive through every geography, topography and climate imaginable, from snow-capped mountains to deserts. We broke it up over two days, staying overnight at a backpackers' camp near Lake Taupo. They didn't know what trouble they were in for when we arrived, taking over the bar, pool tables, and even the air hockey table, where Tahitian tattooist Vatea reigned as supreme champion.

Once in Wellington, we witnessed the opening of the New Zealand tattoo museum, still in a state of semi-construction, but showing great promise and a great amount of work put into it by Steve Droog, among others. The rest of our one free day before the start of the convention was marred by truly shitty weather, but people found ways to entertain themselves, checking out Te Papa, an excellent museum, along with other galleries, and roaming around as much as they could bear, taking it easy and trying to keep warm.

The convention was held in a hangar-like shed 11, right on the waterfront. Once again an international affair, the vibe was great with a good turn-out that kept everyone busy all weekend. Sunday night was capped off with a dinner cruise around the harbor, and although everyone was eating and drinking plenty, certain parties' attempts to instigate a pole-dancing contest were thwarted.

We went our separate ways bright and early the next morning. Some continued on their own, exploring the south island. Some flew straight out of Wellington, and the truly hardcore packed back into the vans for the all-day drive to Auckland. Our van took, shall we say, the scenic route through narrow, winding, nausea-inducing mountain roads. It was nothing, if not an adventure, and an excellent way to end a month of non-stop adventures. 











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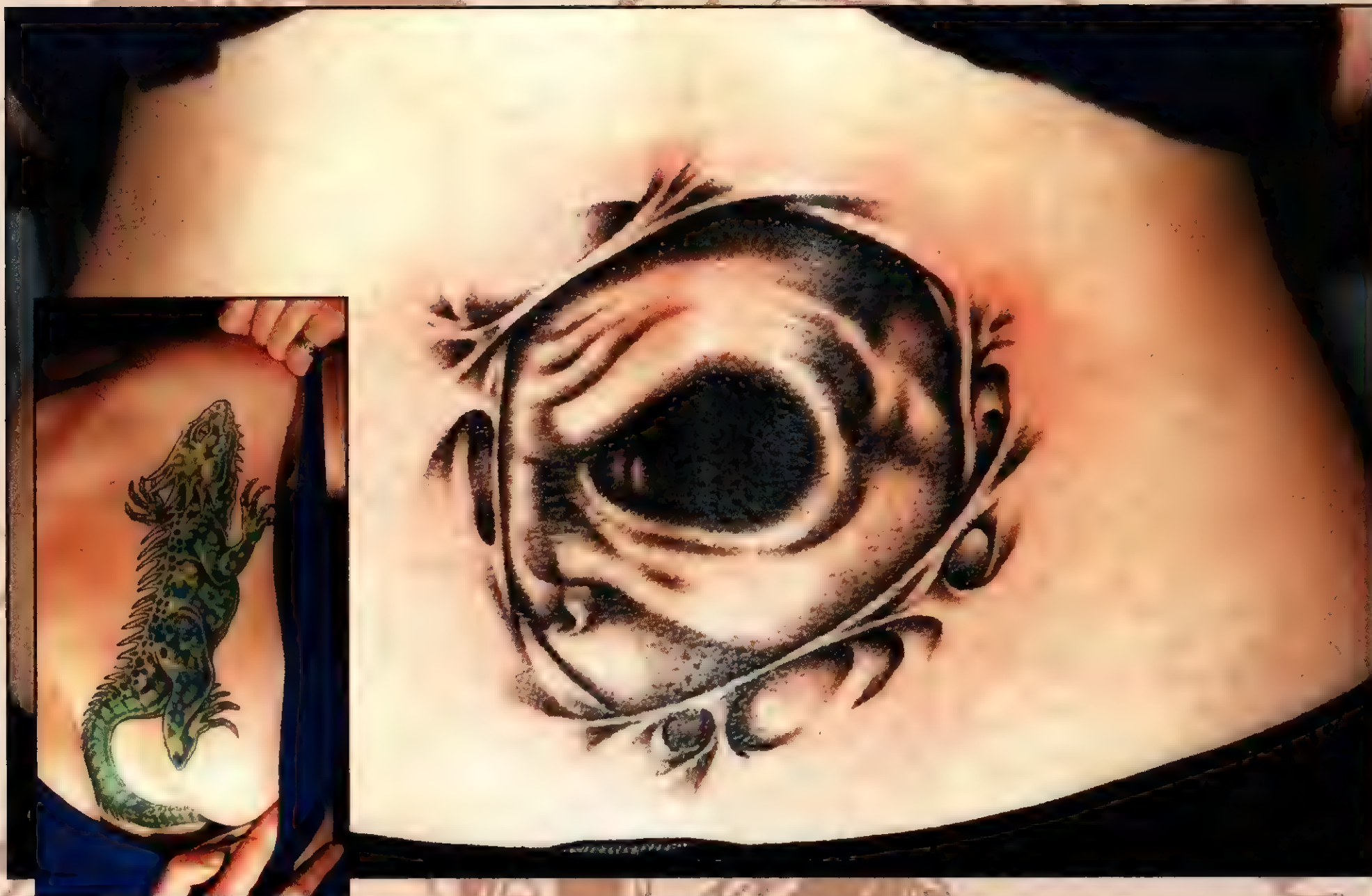


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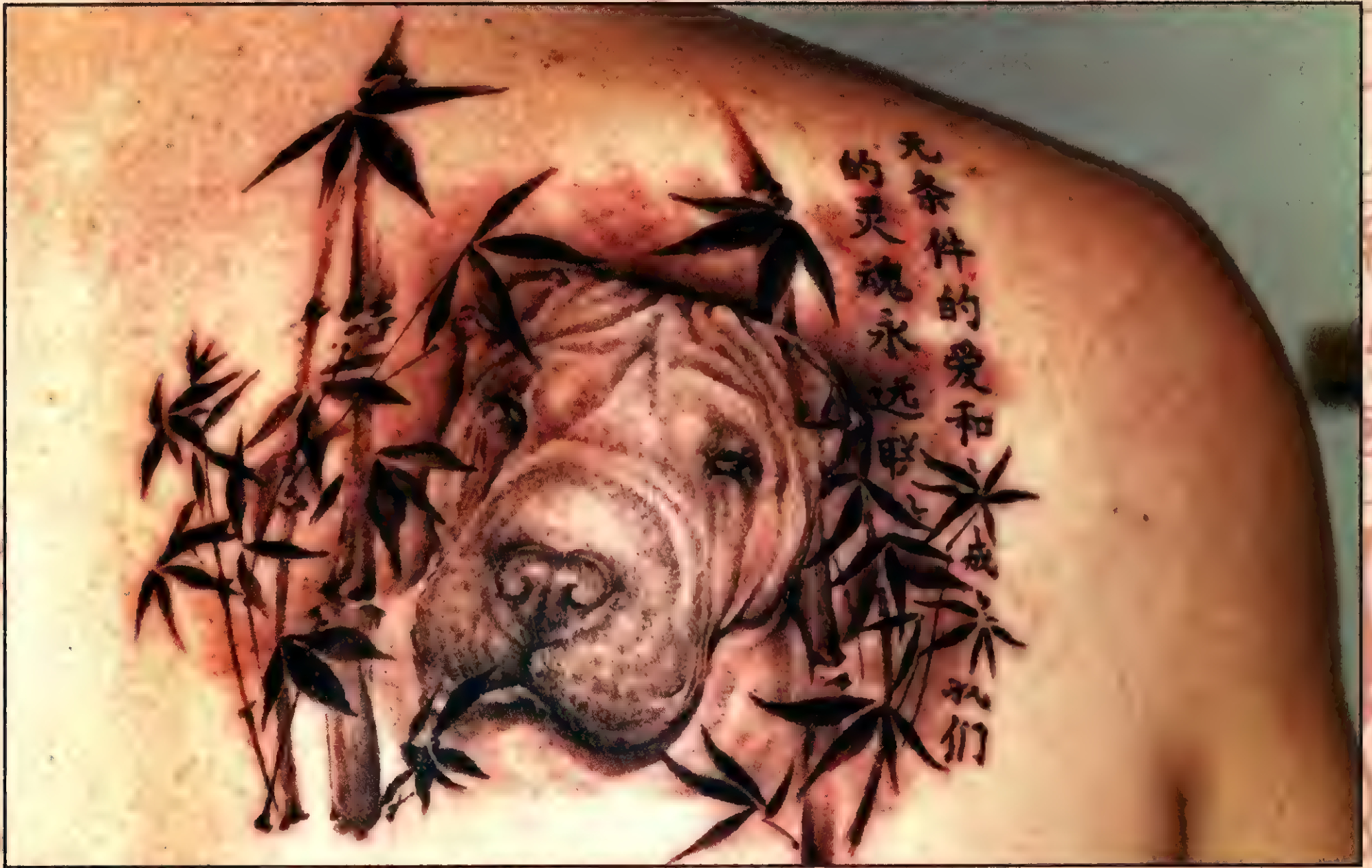


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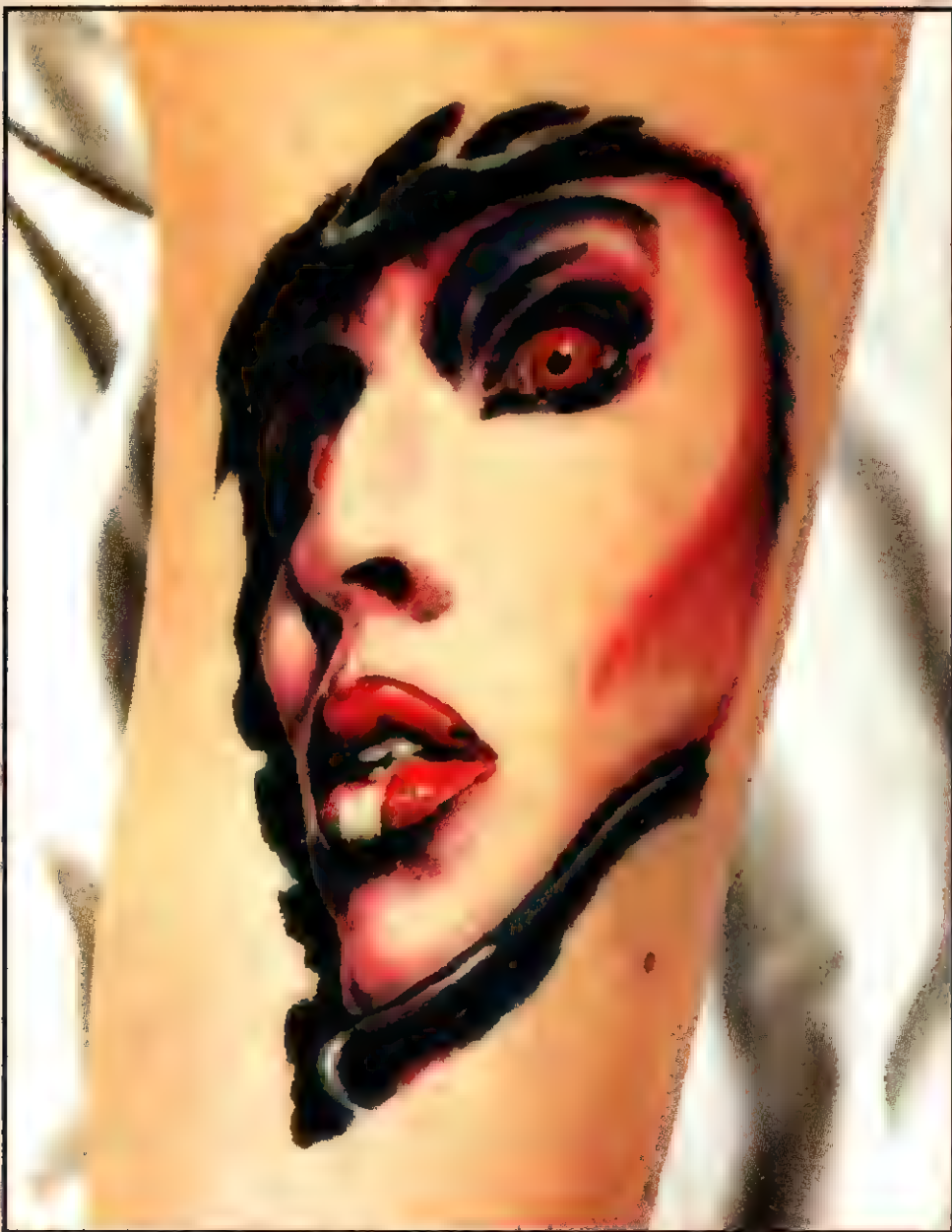


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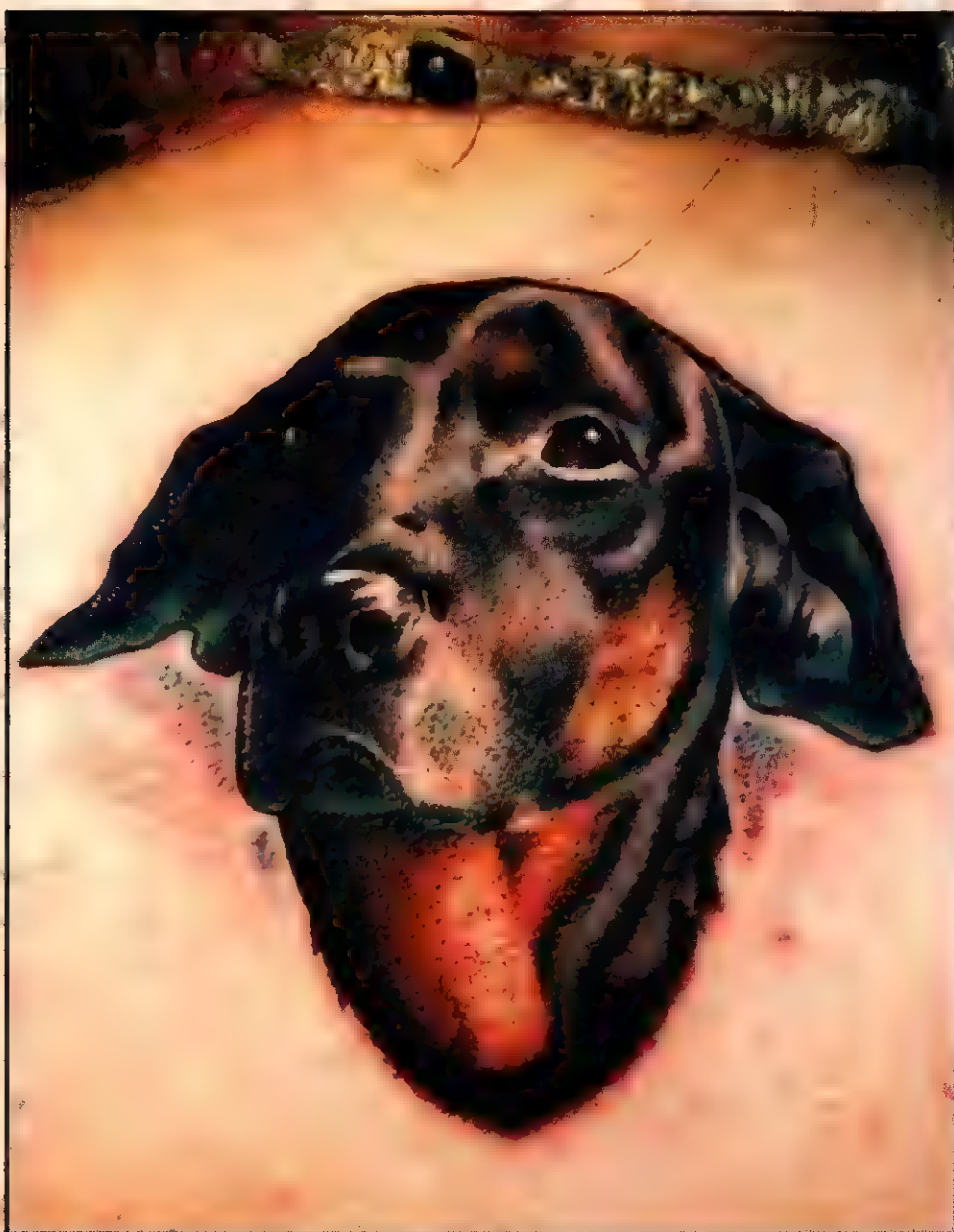




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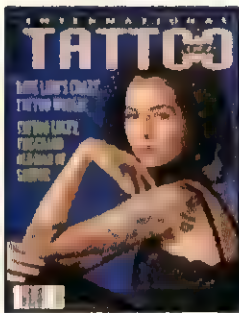
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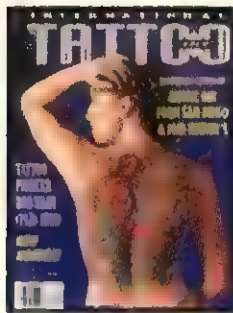
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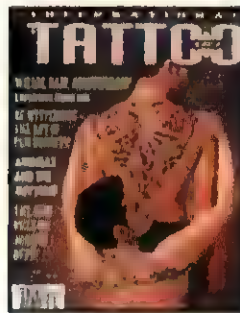
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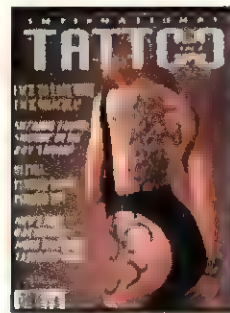
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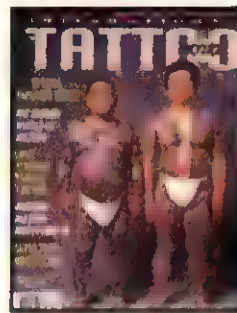
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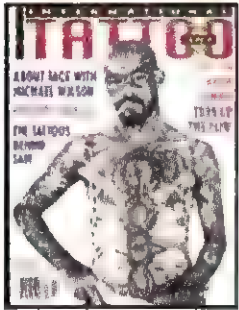
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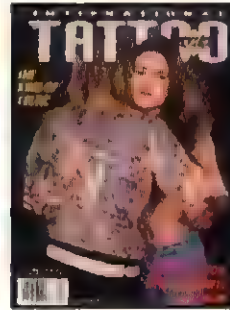
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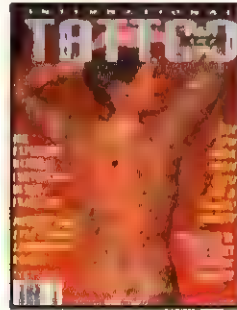
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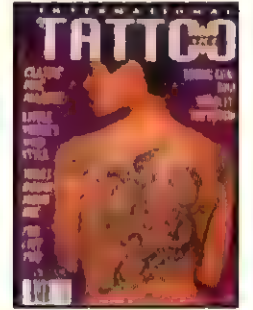
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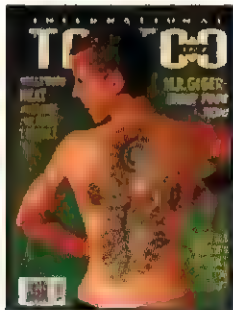
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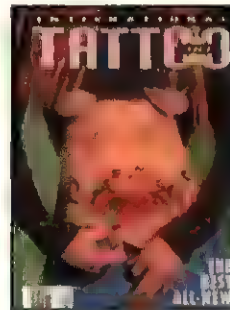
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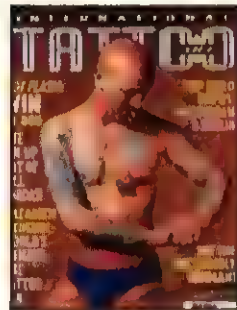
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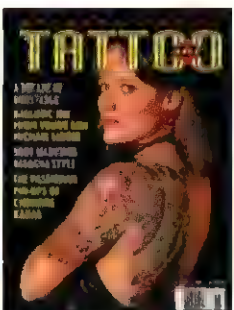
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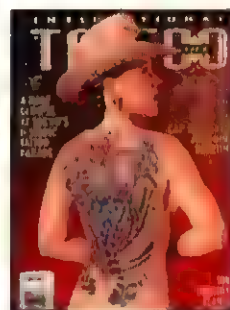
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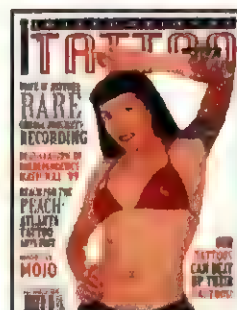
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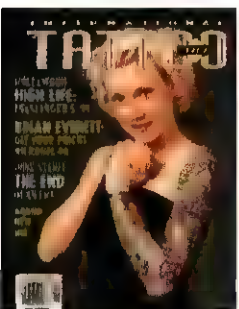
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